

Focus Ireland and PACE

Crime & Homelessness 2002

by Claire Hickey



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Foreword

This study, exploring the relationship between homelessness and crime as perceived by those who have experienced both a state of homelessness and periods of imprisonment, is the first of its kind to be carried out in Ireland. The value of this study is not just in its uniqueness but also in the collaborative nature of the work between Focus Ireland and PACE. Both our organisations have experienced a growth in the incidence of homelessness among those already facing other forms of social exclusion and social disadvantage and believed the time was right for a joint exploration of the issues surrounding homelessness and crime. We believe that it is important that organisations, such as ours, work together to advocate on behalf of those most vulnerable and whose voices may not be otherwise heard.

This is a timely and highly relevant research report given the recent publication of the Government's "Homeless Preventative Strategy". This is a multi-departmental strategy to prevent homelessness among a variety of vulnerable groups including adult prisoners and young people leaving custody. The recognition of ex-offenders as a particularly vulnerable group is an important step forward in the provision of appropriate responses to their needs.

The number of people in prison has increased dramatically over the past twenty years and the needs of people leaving prison have become more complex, homelessness being just one of a set of obstacles that some ex-prisoners face. However, what this exploratory study shows is that while periods of imprisonment can indeed lead to homelessness, homelessness can also lead to imprisonment. The relationship between homelessness and crime is a complex one and one that needs further study, however, this exploratory study does show that homeless men and women perceive a relationship between these two variables and recognise that among other things substance misuse, relationship breakdown, breakdown of social and community networks, education and training disadvantage and a general inability to cope with life after prolonged periods of institutionalisation also contribute to this complex cycle of offending behaviour and homelessness.

The participants in this study recognise that their own personal circumstances can exclude them from full participation in society however, there are critical structural inequalities that must be addressed if men and women leaving prison are to have any real hope of becoming full participative citizens in their communities. Among these critical structural inequalities are an inadequate supply of supported and transition housing for ex-prisoners and those who have experienced homelessness, an inadequate supply of social and affordable housing, an inaccessible private rented sector, an inadequate supply of and/or continuing access to drug and alcohol treatment programmes and a shortage of family support and mediation services to help prevent the breakdown of family and spousal relationships during and immediately after a period of imprisonment or during a spell of homelessness. The recommendations made at the conclusion of this report reflect the range of responses that are required to adequately address the issues of homelessness among the ex-prisoner population. While both organisations are aware that there are no simple answers to the questions posed by this research, we both believe that this exploratory study is an important step towards learning more about the true relationship between homelessness and crime and how organisations like ours can work to reduce both.

We are confident that the findings of this research will strengthen the resolve and commitment of all those working with and on behalf of those who have found themselves caught in a cycle of homelessness and offending behaviour.



Lisa Cuthbert
Director, PACE



Declan Jones
CEO, Focus Ireland

Executive Summary

Introduction

Focus Ireland, a voluntary organisation working with homeless people and PACE, an organisation working with and for ex-offenders recognised that ex-offenders on leaving prison faced homelessness. Given the areas of work of Focus Ireland and PACE it was decided that both organisations could work together to investigate the issue of homelessness among ex-offenders. This would involve looking at the housing difficulties and social barriers that ex-offenders face, the contribution that these makes to their offending and the obstacles that they create for their rehabilitation and reintegration into society and deriving a set of recommendations from this for the future treatment of men and women leaving prison with no fixed abode (NFA).

Focus Ireland

Focus Ireland was established in 1985 in response to the identified needs of homeless women in Dublin city. Since its establishment the organisation has grown and now provides a range of services from long-term and transitional housing to day centres and emergency accommodation.

PACE

PACE was established in 1969 and works in partnership with agencies such as the Probation and Welfare Service, FAS and the VEC to create high quality settlement services for offenders. PACE also provides further training and education for male and female ex-offenders and supported accommodation for men at its Coolock site.

Objectives of the research

To date there has been no significant research into the relationship between homelessness and release from prison in Ireland. Data linking homelessness with prison release is often an accidental by-product of other types of research. Thus the immediate objectives of this research project are to explore the relationships between homelessness, crime and release from prison. Specifically, it aims to:

- Document the experiences of homeless ex-offenders in other countries;
- Document the experiences of homeless ex-offenders in Dublin; and
- Look at the relationship between homelessness and offending as perceived by offenders.

However as PACE and Focus Ireland are both key service providers, it is also important that the research investigates the extent of, and the obstacles to, service use, and to look at how appropriate housing and services can be provided. The overall objective is to provide evidence-based recommendations to combat the cycle of homelessness experienced by ex-prisoners.

Summary of Research Findings

(i) Socio-Demographic Indicators

The participants in the research were characterised by low educational attainment levels, high levels of unemployment, family breakdown/dysfunction, and histories of drug and/or alcohol abuse.

(ii) Homelessness and Crime

This study shows that the relationship between homelessness and crime is a complex one. Homelessness did not inevitably lead to criminal behaviour among the sample. For some (less than half the sample) being homeless led to crime which in turn led to imprisonment. For others it was being released from prison that led directly to homelessness. The type of crimes committed by those homeless prior to their first term of imprisonment shows a preponderance of vagrancy, larceny and drug offences. This is in contrast to the more “serious” crimes committed by those homeless after a period of imprisonment.

However both groups - those homeless prior to and those homeless after their experience in prison – had previous contact with the judicial system from an early age. Forty-one per cent of respondents who had been homeless prior to their first term of imprisonment were on remand for the first time before the age of 18 and 54 per cent of those settled prior to their first term of imprisonment as an adult had been placed on remand for the first time when they were less than 18 years.

The differences between the two groups carried over into the issue of relationship breakdown. Relationship breakdown with immediate family or partner/spouse was common to both groups, but the reasons for the breakdown were different. Those in settled accommodation prior to their term of imprisonment identified the type and nature of the crime they committed as the reason for their relationship breakdown. Those homeless prior to their committal to prison identified other reasons for relationship breakdown such as mental ill health (their own or a member of the family), drug addiction (their own or a member of the family), domestic violence or the threat of anti-social eviction. The differences also carried over into the reasons why they became homeless. The reasons for homelessness among those who were on the streets prior to their imprisonment were similar to the reasons for the breakdown in their relationship. But for those homeless following a period of imprisonment there were additional reasons that included the loss of private rented accommodation or the loss of local authority housing during their imprisonment.

(iii) Other Contributory Factors

Respondents in both groups reported a variety of factors that contributed to their homelessness and their criminal behaviour. These included histories of residential child-care, family dysfunction or breakdown, mental ill health, drug misuse and alcohol addiction.

Thirty-seven respondents reported that their criminal behaviour was directly linked with their drug misuse, and 35 of them (95 per cent) reported that they had committed their offence in order to finance their drug habit. The life experiences reported by the respondents were echoed in the discussions with professionals working in the welfare and prison services and voluntary organisations. All of these recognised drugs as a major factor in offending behaviour.

The issue of alcohol misuse is also important. Sixteen respondents reported a direct link between their alcohol consumption and their offending behaviour. Seven participants reported that their drunken behaviour led to the offence being committed; these offences included Grievous Bodily Harm (GBH) and other types of assault. A further 3 participants had been arrested on drunk and disorderly charges.

(iv) Re-offending Behaviour

A total of 40 of the respondents were convicted of more than one crime and had been in prison on more than one occasion. The average length of total time spent in prison was 72 months. However, many of the respondents were sentenced to short periods of time in prison on a number of occasions. Sentences ranged from between 6 months and 2 years for non-violent crimes.

The key issues that respondents perceived to have contributed to their re-offending behaviour included breakdown of family/partner relationships, the coping difficulties associated with independent living after a period of institutionalisation, and drug and alcohol addiction.

The most important factor cited for re-offending behaviour was drug addiction. Forty-six per cent of respondents reported that homelessness had directly contributed to their offending behaviour, through committing survivalist crimes or the inability to abstain from drug taking when living on the street. The inability to maintain addiction treatment following release from prison was also a significant problem for respondents and this was commented on by key informant interviewees. Homelessness made drug treatment programmes even more difficult to access, as provision is based on catchment area and possession of a permanent address.

(v) Access to and Provision of Information and Advice

The survey found that rates of access to information and advice on release from prison were significantly higher than rates of access while in prison. There were also notable discrepancies between the identified needs of prisoners and the level of support they received. The most common immediate and practical need identified by respondents was accommodation; in addition they reported the need for addiction treatment, family reconciliation services, employment advice, further training and education, and emotional support in the form of counselling. Unfortunately, the level of met need was especially low. For example, 27 respondents required counselling only 6 received it, 29 respondents identified addiction treatment as a need only 16 received it and 25 respondents required employment advice and only 6 received it.

There was little difference between the needs of female and male ex-offenders. The main difficulties faced by the men and women leaving prison proved to be housing, addiction treatment, family/partner reconciliation, employment and "generally adjusting to life". It is interesting to note that female respondents (46 per cent of women or 6 out of 14) ranked more highly the difficulty of "generally adjusting to life outside" as opposed to just 26 per cent of men. There may be a number of reasons for this including the disparity between the level of support and advice available to them when in the Dochas Centre (female prison) and that available to them once released. In addition, the needs of women can be more complex and demanding in terms of co-ordinating services and supports, particularly where women have children and are the primary carer givers.

Discussion

For the majority of respondents it was simply not a case of their homelessness, their drug use or their alcohol misuse that led to the offending behaviour. The findings from this small-scale study indicate a number of pathways into homelessness and a variety of complex relationships between homelessness and the committal of a crime, and between release from prison and entering a cycle of homelessness, crime and re-offending behaviour. For some homelessness contributed to their

offending behaviour through the criminalisation of certain behaviours such as public order offences like being drunk and disorderly and vagrancy, the adoption of criminal behaviour for street survival such as shop lifting, and their development of addictions to cope with the isolation, insecurity and difficulties of being homeless.

For others it was criminal behaviour that led to homelessness, most crucially because the nature of the offences for which they were imprisoned led to a break-up of their relationships and their time in prison led to a loss of accommodation. However in addition both groups had drug and/or alcohol addiction and mental health problems to contend with and these contributed to and exacerbated their problems of homelessness and in turn had an influence on their likelihood of re-offending.

Recommendations

The recommendations suggested in this section are based on the findings of the research supplemented by the interviews and discussions held with both statutory and voluntary service providers. They are broken down under a number of headings including:

1. Custodial and Non-Custodial Sanctions
2. Services while in prison
3. Post-release needs
4. Interaction with other developments
5. Information systems

Custodial and Non-Custodial Sanctions

This research shows that the imposition of custodial sentences for relatively minor offences led to family and spousal relationship destabilisation and accommodation and employment loss. Many of the respondents had experienced periods in prison for offences such as vagrancy, public disorder and larceny. In addition, the survivalist nature of these crimes indicates that the criminal behaviour is not always predatory but based on subsistence and need. This suggests that custodial sentences might not always be appropriate for such offenders.

1. There needs to be a review of the use of custodial sentences as part of our judicial system for people who are homeless. Committal to prison should be viewed as a “punishment of last resort”.
2. If custodial sentencing is to continue as the punishment of choice by the courts, initiatives must be developed to overcome the difficulties faced by short-term prisoners in accessing education, training and detoxification programmes. An initial assessment of prisoner needs in terms of education and training, medical, psychiatric and/or substance misuse difficulties should be conducted for both long and short-term prisoners and the appropriate interventions identified.
3. Education programmes for Gardai, Judges, and other professionals working with the judiciary is necessary. It is essential that those in contact with homeless adults in a law enforcement capacity should understand more completely the particular difficulties that homeless men and women face and what the implications of imprisonment might be on their accommodation, family relationship or substance abuse status and on their likelihood of re-offending.
4. Adequate resourcing of the Drug Court is essential to make it a viable option to the imposition of a custodial sentence.
5. An assessment of need immediately prior to release is also essential to provide the supports necessary to help prevent re-offending behaviour.

6. The practice of releasing prisoners with no accommodation late on Friday evenings needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Services While in Prison

It is clear from the interviews with respondents that access to and uptake of the developmental, educational and training and employment programmes within the prison is very poor among the respondents. In full recognition of the current resource shortages in our prisons, the following recommendations are made:

1. In addition to assessments of need at the beginning and end of sentences, such assessments should be a recurring activity throughout the person's term of imprisonment as needs and personal circumstances change over time.
2. Facilities within the prison system should have a range of "family-friendly" facilities to encourage family visits.
3. Identification of family mediation and family support needs should be an integral part of the assessment process and the appropriate services developed to ensure that family networks are protected during periods of imprisonment.
4. There should be greater inter-statutory agency collaboration and these agencies must also collaborate more effectively with voluntary/community organisations to ensure the recognition and appropriate response to assessments of need, even when they are carried out by other institutions/organisations.
5. Pre-release advice, information and support is essential particularly for offenders sentenced to longer than 2 but less than 4 years.
6. The detoxification, therapeutic and rehabilitative facilities for drug users should be expanded and the links between prison facilities and community facilities strengthened (Centre for Health Promotion Studies, 2000). Continuity of drug treatment for ex-offenders would also increase accommodation chances, as local authorities would be more willing to re-register applicants with a substance misuse history if the substance misuse is being addressed.
7. Offenders sentenced to less than 9 months in prison should not be removed from community or city drug treatment clinics (waiting) lists.
8. The provision of alcohol treatment programmes should be improved.
9. Offenders sentenced to less than 12 months in prison should not be removed from Local Authority waiting lists.
10. Prisoners at least 4 months prior to their release should be allowed to re-register on Local Authority housing waiting lists if their accommodation has been lost during the term of their imprisonment.

Post-release Support

The key principles underlying the provision of support following release from prison should be consistency and continuity. Key recommendations for post-release support include:

1. A variety of appropriate accommodation ranging from emergency accommodation hostels through to transition/supported housing through to permanent housing be that provided by local authorities, voluntary organisations or the private rented sector is needed.
2. Continuation of drug treatment programmes post-release is essential.
3. The introduction of needs assessments throughout the lifetime of an individual's sentence would greatly help in the identification of ex-offenders in need of support and the types of supports required.

The External Environment

1. The needs of homeless ex-offenders are complex and cut across sectoral divides. The development and implementation of strategies to prevent homelessness among ex-prisoners should be developed in light of other strategies developed for the homeless population as a whole, e.g. Strategy on Youth Homelessness, Homeless Action Plans, Housing Strategies, Health Strategy, National Anti-Poverty Strategy etc.
2. Housing departments should designate prison liaison personnel to work with Probation and Welfare or Prison Service staff to carry out homeless assessments at least 6 weeks in advance of release.
3. Housing Associations offering both long-term and transitional housing must ensure that their letting/admissions policies do not discriminate unnecessarily against ex-offenders.

Information Systems

1. An information system that collects information on socio-demographic and other indicators is needed that will help identify prisoners' needs and provide more comprehensive information on Ireland's prisoner population.
2. The development of appropriate information systems to collect information on accommodation and other needs of offenders in pre-release for planning and provision of services and supports purposes.
3. Inclusion of prisoners who are homeless in homeless statistics is essential so as to provide a clearer picture of both the homeless and prisoner populations for planning purposes.
4. There needs to be recognition by prison authorities that rough sleeping is not the only form of homelessness, but prison statistics relating to homeless inmates should include those men and women who have been or who on release will be staying in hostels, B&Bs and dossing with friends and/or family.

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Chapter 1

Background to the Study

Introduction

Focus Ireland, a voluntary organisation working with homeless people and PACE, an organisation working with and for ex-offenders recognised that ex-offenders on leaving prison faced homelessness. Given the areas of work of Focus Ireland and PACE it was decided that both organisations could work together to investigate the issue of homelessness among ex-offenders. This would involve looking at the housing difficulties and social barriers that ex-offenders face, the contribution that these makes to their offending and the obstacles that they create for their rehabilitation and reintegration into society and deriving a set of recommendations from this for the future treatment of men and women leaving prison with no fixed abode (NFA).

Focus Ireland

Focus Ireland was established in 1985 in response to the identified needs of homeless women in Dublin city. Since its establishment the organisation has grown and now provides a range of services from long-term and transitional housing to day centres and emergency accommodation in Dublin, Waterford and Limerick. The mission of Focus Ireland is to “advance the rights of homeless persons to live in a place they call home through quality services, research and advocacy”. Its main aims are to

- Respond to the needs of homeless people and those at risk of becoming homeless through a range of appropriate high quality services;
- Provide emergency, transitional and long-term accommodation for people including those who need supported care; and
- Campaign and lobby for the rights of homeless people and the prevention of homelessness.

PACE

PACE was established in 1969 and works in partnership with agencies such as the Probation and Welfare Service, FAS and the VEC to create high quality settlement services for offenders. PACE provides further training and education for male and female ex-offenders at its Santry project and supported accommodation for men at its Coolock site. Recently PACE has begun working with women, and through its resettlement programme it will provide safe supported accommodation for women leaving prison. It is intended that this period of settlement with support will break the cycle of prison and recidivism. PACE aims to:

- Invest in high quality resettlement services for offenders and ex-offenders that promote confidence within the community.
- Promote safe social inclusion of offenders and ex-offenders by increasing an individual's

chances of employment and securing and sustaining appropriate accommodation.

- Ensure that the services provided are accessible and suitable for men and women.
- Contribute to reducing the community's anxieties about offenders.
- Promote and develop plans where there is a need for new resettlement services.

The aims and objectives of Focus Ireland and PACE are broadly similar. These are the promotion of inclusion for those most vulnerable or marginalized in society and the provision of adequate and appropriate services to assist those most in need.

Objectives of the research

To date there has been no significant research into the relationship between homelessness and release from prison in Ireland. Data linking homelessness with prison release is often an accidental by-product of other types of research. For example, release from prison has sometimes been cited as a precipitating factor in studies of the primary causes/pathways into homelessness, (Houghton & Hickey, 2000). Thus the immediate objectives of this research project are to explore the relationships between homelessness, crime and release from prison. Specifically, it aims to:

- i) Document the experiences of homeless ex-offenders in other countries;
- ii) Document the experiences of homeless ex-offenders in Dublin; and
- iii) Look at the relationship between homelessness and offending as perceived by offenders.

However as PACE and Focus Ireland are both key service providers, it is also important that the research investigates the extent of, and the obstacles to, service use, and to look at how appropriate housing and services can be provided. The overall objective is to provide evidence-based recommendations to combat the cycle of homelessness experienced by ex-prisoners.

Research Methodologies

Two groups participated in the research.

The main group was currently homeless men and women who had previous experience of being in prison and the second group was professionals working in the prison system, the probation and welfare system and/or staff working in homeless organisations. They were selected on the basis of their experience of working with individuals experiencing homelessness and with histories of offending behaviour and imprisonment. Their views contributed to the discussion and formulation of appropriate policy responses.

Identifying the Target Population: Homeless Ex-offenders

In order to interview as broad a spectrum of homeless ex-offenders as possible and to ensure the disclosure of key information, clients of both Focus Ireland and PACE were identified for inclusion in the study.

Those who participated in the study were both homeless and had experienced periods of imprisonment. In order to qualify for inclusion respondents had to meet the following practical criteria:

- i) To be or have been homeless in the last 12 months and to meet the definition of homelessness as laid down in the Housing Act 1988;
- ii) To have been charged, remanded and sentenced to a period of imprisonment.

Definition of homelessness

The definition of homelessness that was used was the one included in the Housing Act. This is a relatively broad one with households being regarded as homeless if:

- a) there is no accommodation available, which in the opinion of the authority, he, together with any other person who normally resides with him or who might reasonably be expected to reside with him, can reasonably occupy or remain in occupation of, or
- b) he is living in a hospital, county home, night shelter or other such institution and is so living because he has no accommodation of the kind referred to in paragraph a) and he is, in the opinion of the Authority, unable to provide accommodation from his resources (Housing Act, 1988: Section 2).

Finding the Target Population: Issues of Sampling and Selection

Given the characteristics of the homeless population; transient, highly mobile and often chaotic; it was impossible to draw up sampling frames and randomly select participants. Instead Focus Ireland and PACE teams approached users of their services and sought the participation of those who matched the above-mentioned criteria.

The identification of such clients was not especially difficult given the nature of the relationship between client and key worker. Eligible clients were then invited to participate in the structured interview with their relevant key worker in the case of Street Outreach and PACE clients and with a trained research assistant in the cases of those identified through the Coffee Shop and Crisis Team. However, securing their participation proved to be a major obstacle and many eligible individuals were unwilling to participate. This means that the sample in the study was self-selected and may not necessarily be fully representative of homeless ex-offenders. As a result the findings of this study must be regarded as indicative rather than definitive.

The main difficulty experienced by Focus Ireland staff in securing interviews related to the very nature of the services provided by the organisation. These (Outreach and Crisis Desk in particular) provide crisis and emergency assistance, for example, responding to immediate accommodation needs or referrals to emergency services, provision of food, shower or laundry facilities etc and as such customers, although identified as potential respondents, were often not in the 'frame-of-mind' needed to participate in an hour-long interview. Although many potential respondents promised to participate at a later date, none turned up for their appointments or when in contact with the service again needed further emergency assistance.

Constraints of time and resources limited the numbers who could be interviewed. But interviews were carried out with 46 participants over a ten-week period. Those who participated were over the age of 18 and gave informed consent for participation and recording of information.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire used with the homeless ex-offenders was designed to obtain comprehensive data on their socio-demographic characteristics, prison background, service use while in prison

and on leaving prison, accommodation options and issues of accommodation access and criminal history. The themes/topics chosen for inclusion in the questionnaire were based on a literature review of European and North American research studies and on issues identified by key informants. Research from other countries illustrates the complex pathways into both homelessness and offending behaviour such as alcohol and/or drug misuse, mental ill health, and dysfunctional family relationships. Key issues identified by Irish professionals working with homeless ex-offenders included service use and information sources while in prison, access to services and housing on release from prison, training and education needs and family support/mediation issues. The questionnaire was structured as follows:

- Socio-demographics details
- History of homelessness
- Factors influencing criminal behaviour
- Service use during period of imprisonment
- Pre-release preparation
- Experiences of homelessness and service use following release from prison
- Previous experience of the penal system

Three separate teams of interviewers were trained in the administration of the structured questionnaire to participants:

- 6 key-workers from Focus Ireland's Street Outreach team;
- 2 project workers from PACE; and
- 1 research assistant hired specifically for this research project.

The training of the interviewers included a presentation on the background to and objectives of the research study. The criteria for participant inclusion were clearly established for the interviewers. Further training was provided on the structure, content, sequence of questions, the themes identified and the methods for recording additional information. It was determined during the training process that interviews would not be tape-recorded. Key-workers felt this would be inappropriate. Instead interviewers took written notes.

A liaison person was identified in each of the Focus Ireland teams participating in the study and in PACE. The role of the liaison person was to help the research team identify potential respondents, liaise with the team of interviewers and the project manager and test the questionnaire among a small sample of suitable respondents. Following the testing of the questionnaire an additional number of questions were included such as age when first homeless. Interviewers were also instructed to record details of juvenile detention and the section on previous experience of the penal system was moved to the end of the questionnaire as it was considered "off-putting" to the respondents when placed to the front. The purpose of the structured questionnaire was to address objectives 2 and 3 of the research study and to encourage people to reflect on the key issues that they perceived led to their homelessness and their criminal behaviour.

Interviews were conducted with 46 respondents (14 women and 32 men) over a ten-week period, 22 respondents were identified through Focus Ireland services and 24 through PACE services.

Key Informant Interviews

A total of 14 key informant interviewees were identified by Focus Ireland and PACE for potential participation in the study. They were selected on a number of criteria including:

- Knowledge and experience of the prison system in Ireland; or
- Knowledge and experience of the probation and welfare system in Ireland; or
- Knowledge and experience of working with homeless men and women; or
- Knowledge and experience of working with ex-offenders.

A total of 10 statutory key informants were identified including 7 from the Probation and Welfare service and 3 from the prison service. Contact was made with 5 key informants from the Probation and Welfare service and interviews were carried out with each. Contact with only 2 key informants from the prison service was made and one interview was arranged and conducted.

A total of 3 key informant interviews were held with voluntary organisations working with homeless men and women who had experienced periods of imprisonment. A further one interview was conducted with an academic criminologist.

An interview schedule was used to interview all key informants. While it was slightly different in format for each key informant group it covered broadly the same themes and topics. These included:

- Description of the work or service offered in the place of employment
- Differences between the experiences of those committed to short-terms of imprisonment and those committed to longer terms (4 or more years)
- Current advice, information and support practices
- Gaps in current service provision for homeless ex-offenders and most appropriate organisations/institutions to address these gaps
- Issue of homelessness as a factor in criminal activity
- Other issues that impact on criminal behaviour and homelessness e.g. family breakdown, drug and/or alcohol abuse etc.
- The key difficulties facing people leaving prison

These themes were selected largely on a review of European and North American research studies. These identified topics, such as the different experiences of short and long-term prisoners, inappropriate or unavailable preparation programmes for release, variations in the types and severity of homelessness experienced by ex-offenders, the question of repeat offending, and support networks and supportive family relationships, were considered important in the study of ex-offenders.

A research assistant hired specifically for this project carried out the key informant interviews. All interviews were carried out in the place of employment of the key informant. Interviews, on average, took approximately 1 hour.

Lessons for future research

This research detailed in the following chapters illustrates that the relationship between crime and homelessness is one that clearly merits and requires further investigation. The purpose of this study has been to begin this exploration by asking a limited sample of homeless ex-offenders to reflect on their own perceptions of the relationship. Based on the difficulties experienced by the

Focus Ireland research team, a number of issues would need to be considered if a more detailed study of this area was being considered.

It would, for example, require more substantial funding and the use of somewhat different methodologies. As will become clear from this study the relationship between homelessness, crime and imprisonment is a complex one. At the most simple level homelessness can be a cause of crime and through that of imprisonment. But this is complicated by the fact that it may not be the crime as such that leads to imprisonment but the fact that the court knows that the offender is homeless. This might, in their view, rule out other options like fines and community service. The other way in which these two might be related is that imprisonment for a crime can on release be the cause of homelessness, particularly where drugs and sex offences are involved. Such offenders may have particular difficulties returning or being welcomed home.

Each relationship requires different methods of study. The most appropriate way of investigating the first relationship would involve tracking offenders from contact with the police, to decisions on whether to prosecute or not, to the sentences passed down by the courts, to the characteristics of those offenders who are sentenced to prison. At this point it would be possible to see if such offenders had distinct characteristics like homelessness, previous criminal records, nature of offences charged with, and to look at the role these played in the sentence given. This would allow us to see if homeless offenders were more likely to be sent to prison than offenders with homes when they are both charged with comparable offences and hence to see if homelessness “causes” imprisonment. The second possible relationship is that one of the consequences of a prison sentence is becoming homeless on release. In this sense prison causes homelessness. The most appropriate way this relationship can be investigated is through following a sample of released prisoners (a “prisoner re-entry” study) and seeing what happens to them.

However both kinds of study would raise issues such as interview location and interviewee compensation. All of the respondents in this study gave fully and freely of their time and answered all the questions to the best of their ability. All were interviewed on site, either in Focus Ireland or PACE projects. However, given the nature of the study and the need to ensure participation by hard to reach groups, provision within the study budget should be made to allow participants to be interviewed in a safe and secure environment e.g. a café or coffee shop. In addition, consideration should be given to payment of a participation fee. The debate regarding payment for participation is a contentious one with fears of respondent bias. However, an argument can be made that the respondents are giving up a considerable period of their time to participate in the study and should be remunerated for their time. The payment made does not necessarily have to be in cash but could be made in the form of a postal order or gift certificate; in fact it is not advisable for interviewers to carry large amounts of cash when sourcing potential respondents.

Chapter 2

The Experiences of Homeless Ex-Offenders: A Review of Research

Introduction

There has been little research in Ireland on the complex relationship between homelessness and crime or on the difficulties and problems faced by offenders on leaving prison. In this chapter, therefore, we review research from the UK, Canada, the USA and Australia, which has examined these issues, and we show how much of the research shows an overlapping of variables including most notably crime, homelessness, prior experience of institutionalisation, mental ill health, substance misuse and the absence of adequate support networks. We also include the results of Irish research where they are appropriate.

(i) Youth, Homelessness & Offending Behaviour

Research in Britain has found that young people and children in care are amongst the most disadvantaged and socially excluded populations (Home Office Research Study, 1992). Twenty-six (26) per cent of all adult prisoners and 40 per cent of all prisoners under the age of 21 in the UK have been in care at some point in their lives (National Prison Survey, 1991). A study conducted in 1999 found that linkages between offending behaviour and committal to prison and histories of residential childcare are also important in Ireland (Kelleher et al, 2000). It showed that 65 per cent of the special school population had served a prison sentence two years after leaving state care. This was considerably higher than the 25 per cent of the health board care population who had served a prison sentence two years after leaving state care. The study found that the probability of a young person leaving care being arrested was related to whether or not the young person abused drugs, was male and whether or not the young person had a stable care placement. Furthermore, the study found that the probability of a young care leaver receiving a prison sentence was also related to whether or not the young person abused drugs. "A young care leaver committed to prison is three times more likely to be abusing drugs than a young person not committed to prison" (Kelleher et al, 2000:14).

In addition O'Mahoney's (1997) profile of prisoners in Mountjoy shows that juvenile incarceration can be an important factor in adult offending. He found that 77 per cent of prisoners in the sample had spent time in a juvenile offenders facility. The study also found that 57 per cent of prisoners who had ever received a custodial sentence had first been in custody before the age of 18.

Research in Canada involving interviews with street youth in Vancouver and Toronto brings

homelessness into the picture. It found that living on the streets, by itself, contributed to youth crime, arrest and committal to prison (Hagan and McCarthy, 1997). It identified age and other family characteristics as factors associated with becoming street homeless, and the authors show that such homelessness does lead to more crime. Street life for the homeless young people involved was characterised as violent and dominated by the challenge for food, money and accommodation. The study showed that youth in Toronto were less involved in youth crime and had fewer arrests than youth in Vancouver; the researchers concluded that this was because Toronto had more social supports and services for these young people than Vancouver, which emphasised crime control. Earlier work by Hagan & McCarthy suggests that young people are more likely to offend after, rather than before, becoming homeless (Hagan & McCarthy, 1991). Research conducted in the USA by Whitbeck and Simons (1987) (referred to in Hagan and McCarthy) found that 43 per cent of homeless young people shoplifted on the street, 33 per cent sold drugs, 32 per cent committed burglary and 9 per cent worked in prostitution. Qualitative research by Palenski (1984) found that the 36 young homeless people he interviewed in New York City, had engaged in criminal behaviour out of necessity, suggesting a survivalist nature to the crimes they committed.

Finally research by Campbell and Harrington (2000) found that the greater the number of risk factors in a young person's life the greater the chances of them becoming offenders. Risk factors include mental ill health, experience of the statutory care system, drug and/or alcohol abuse and family breakdown. The research showed that although only 6 per cent of boys under the age of 18 had at least 4 risk factors, 85 per cent of them had committed at least one offence and 57 per cent of this group were considered persistent or serious offenders.

(ii) Mental Health, Homelessness & Offending Behaviour

The incidence of mental ill health among the homeless population has been well documented both in European and American research studies. These suggest that homeless adults may be twice as likely to suffer from a psychiatric illness as those in the general population. The prevalence of severe psychiatric disorder among the homeless has been estimated at between 25 and 50 per cent (Feeney et al, 2000). Recent Irish research among hostel dwelling men in Dublin has confirmed this in Ireland. It found that 64 per cent were suffering from some form of mental health condition. While 52 per cent of men reported suffering from depression, only one-third were taking medication (Feeney et al, 2000).

The incidence of mental health conditions among prisoner populations has also been investigated in Ireland and other countries. A recent health survey conducted among the Irish prisoner population found that the mental health indicators for prisoners were much worse than for the general population. It found that 48 per cent of male and 75 per cent of female prisoners were classed at case¹ level using the GHQ-12² instrument (The Centre for Health Promotion Studies, 2000:5). Carmody and McEvoy's 1996 study of female prisoners in Irish prisons found that 49 per cent of respondents had received psychiatric treatment at some time, the majority of these as in-patients.

¹Caseness expresses the probability that a prisoner may be found to have psychiatric illness at second stage interview (The Centre for Health Promotion, 2000:5)

²GHQ-12 is the standardised General Health Questionnaire with a format of 12 questions to indicate psychological distress developed by Goldberg (1972)

These figures would appear to be considerably in excess of those in other countries. It has been estimated that approximately 16 per cent of the prison population in the United States suffered from a mental condition (US Dept. of Justice, 1999). Recent surveys by the Bureau of Justice Studies (BJS) found that 16 per cent of state prison inmates, 7 per cent of Federal prison inmates and 16 per cent of those in local jails reported either a mental condition or an overnight stay in a mental hospital. In addition, approximately 16 per cent of all those on probation (approximately 547,800) reported that they too had a mental condition or reported an overnight stay in a mental hospital.

However the exact nature of the interaction between mental ill health, homelessness, criminal behaviour and committal to prison has been less well explored though it has been examined in the USA. Here mentally ill State prisoners were found to be more than twice as likely as other inmates to report living on the streets or in a shelter in the 12 months prior to their arrest (20 per cent as compared with 9 per cent) (US Dept. of Justice, 1999). The US Department of Justice study found that mentally ill offenders reported high rates of homelessness, unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse and physical and sexual abuse prior to their current term of imprisonment. During the year prior to their arrest 30 per cent of mentally ill inmates in jail and 20 per cent of those in State or Federal prisons reported a period of homelessness in the previous twelve months.

(iii) Crime and Homelessness

There has been considerable research into the influence of environmental and housing conditions on crime and criminal behaviour. The early Chicago School of criminologists, for example, in the 1920s and 1930s used “mapping” techniques of neighbourhoods and the recording of “life histories” of juvenile delinquents to demonstrate the impact of environmental factors on criminality. This influenced the development of countless initiatives aimed at reducing crime through improving physical conditions for people, through improved housing design, increased provision of amenities within housing developments and so on (Bacik, 2001). By contrast, however, the links between lack of housing and crime have been less well explored by researchers.

Research conducted by Wardhaugh, Carlen and Bridges, funded by the ESRC in the UK between 1992 and 1995³, examined the relationship between homelessness and crime among juveniles, in three cities. The researchers interviewed 150 homeless young people and interviews were conducted with staff from both voluntary and statutory bodies working with the homeless. The findings from the interviews show that most of the young people described their involvement in crime as survivalist, that is, committed in order to make a living while on the streets. As such it involved begging, prostitution and property crime. Other crime was a form of escape from the physical and psychological conditions of their homelessness. These included drug and alcohol-related public order offences (Carlen, 1996, referred to by Bacik, 2001).

Travis et al (2001) refer to two studies one of which estimates that as many as one quarter of all homeless people in the United States had served time in prison. Statistics from the California

³Published as Carlen, P. (1996), *Jigsaw: A Political Criminology of Youth Homelessness*. Bucks: Open University Press

Department of Corrections reports that at any given time 10 per cent of the state's parolees are homeless. This figure is significantly higher in urban areas such as San Francisco and Los Angeles, where as many as 30 to 50 per cent of parolees are homeless (California Department of Corrections, 1997).

It has also been shown that offending by homeless people, in particular rough sleepers, is high and more often than not arises from personal need rather than the desire for personal gain (Ballintyne, 1999). It has been argued (Snow, Baker & Anderson, 1989) that there are three processes attached to street homelessness, which makes it more likely that rough sleepers, in particular, will commit an offence under the law. These include:

- The criminalisation of street life that is attaching criminal connotations to public activities such as public drinking and vagrancy.
- The stigmatisation of street homelessness whereby the visibility and suspicion of rough sleepers as potential threats to community safety mean that they may be more likely to be formally processed for offences that may otherwise have been ignored.
- The adoption of criminal behaviour for street survival whereby rough sleepers commit crimes such as shop lifting or other minor public order offences in order to survive on the streets.

Ballintyne's study (1999) found a high level of offending among rough sleepers, the majority of which was minor in nature. The study found that although some rough sleepers do commit more serious offences, this was not the typical pattern. For example, 72 per cent of them reported theft from shops and 62 per cent reported minor public order offences. This pattern of frequent, repeat and low level offending was combined with high levels of contact with the police. Two main motivations are reported for their criminal behaviour, "circumstance" was given as the reason for public order offences while "need" was reported as the reason for theft from shops (Ballintyne, 1999). Carlen et al cite similar motivations in their Three Cities project (1996).

Hagan & McCarthy (1997) also refer to the subsistence nature of the crimes committed in their study of Canadian street youth. Their findings indicated that street homelessness among young people in Toronto and Vancouver leads to more crime. The study found that theft of food and more serious crimes such as car theft, credit card fraud and burglary were significantly related to both hunger and lack of shelter. The authors note that while not all street crimes are subsistence related, many are motivated by need. The authors refer to Freeman's (1996) "foraging" model of crime; this approach notes that although crime is "often wilfully predatory, it can also be subsistence motivated" (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997:104).

Fisher (1992) estimates that anywhere between 20 and 66 per cent of homeless people have been arrested or imprisoned in the past compared with 22 per cent of men and 6 per cent of women in the general population. Fisher attributes this to a number of distinct characteristics including i) long-term deviant life styles that is people who are deeply involved in criminal activity or anti-social behaviour including drug users; ii) subsistence circumstances that is the need to commit crimes for material subsistence; iii) adaptation of criminal behaviour as a part of adjusting to street life; and iv) diminished capacity that is crime resulting from mental illness.

The international literature suggests that defendants with identifiable characteristics are likely to be disadvantaged in the handing down of custodial sanctions (O'Donnell, 1998). Research in the UK

has shown how, for example, accommodation status can influence the use of custodial and non-custodial sanctions. One survey looked at 495 mentally vulnerable defendants appearing before magistrates' courts in London. It found that 83.6 per cent of those with stable accommodation received bail compared to 46.6 per cent of those without stable accommodation. The researchers also identified 105 custody cases that they considered suitable for bail, but: "[T]hey had all been remanded in custody, often because of concern about their lack of housing and ability to return to court" (Kennedy et al, 1997).

Irish prison statistics yield little information on the number of prisoners who are homeless. Recent profiles of male prisoners in Mountjoy prison in Dublin by O'Mahoney (1993, 1997) indicate that 3 per cent and 7 per cent respectively of the sample populations were homeless. These figures are considerably lower than those found in comparative studies from the UK. For example Taylor and Parrot's 1988 survey of prisoners remanded in custody in the Greater London area found that 33 per cent of 15-24 year olds were of no fixed abode (NFA). The National Prison Survey (1991) in the UK identified 13 per cent of the prisoner population with no permanent residence prior to their imprisonment (Murie, 1998). A recent snapshot survey of the incidence of homelessness among male and female prisoners in Mountjoy Prison and the Dochas Centre respectively conducted by PACE in 2002 shows the incidence of homelessness to be closer to Taylor and Parrot's estimate than O'Mahoney's. The PACE survey found that 33 per cent of all Irish female prisoners in the Dochas Centre will be homeless on release from prison and 35 per cent of men reported that they will not have accommodation upon their release (PACE, 2002). Prison statistics revealing the incidence of homelessness among the prisoner population must be treated with caution as the level of homelessness may be under-reported. As both Murie (1998) and O'Mahoney (1993) point out, prisoners may provide a parental address or residential address to which they cannot return to or are not welcome to return to in lieu of any real place of residence. This phenomenon has also been observed in Australia, where official rates of homelessness among offenders are thought to underestimate the real scale of the problem, as offenders are reluctant to state their accommodation type as homeless for fear of stigmatisation and discrimination prior to and after release from prison (Baldry, 2001).

(iv) Leaving Prison: Obstacles to a Crime-Free Life

While there have been few examinations of the causal links between homelessness and crime, research, particularly from England and Scotland, has shown that prisoners face a number of specific difficulties in their attempts to re-integrate and to live independently and crime free on leaving prison. These include housing problems, difficulties with training and employment and problems of substance misuse (both drugs and/or alcohol).

(a) Housing

A range of research suggests that ex-prisoners are more likely to re-offend if they do not have adequate accommodation to return to on their release from prison. A Home Office research report stated, "although crime has not been shown to be the inevitable consequence of homelessness, some clear links have been exposed" (Ramsey, 1986). Fairhead & Marshall (1979), for example, found that housing is a key variable in the relationship between homelessness and re-offending, and it is the one problem facing ex-offenders "...for which there is any hope of providing resources to enable alternative decisions to be made" (Fairhead & Marshall, 1979:5). Banks and Fairhead

(1976) found that 42 per cent of short-term prisoners were convicted within one year, but the recidivism rate among homeless men was much higher at 66 per cent than the 26 per cent experienced by non-homeless men. Similarly Ramsay (1986) found that 69 per cent of prisoners who had no home were re-convicted within two years as opposed to one-third of those with good accommodation.

It has also been found that significant numbers of ex-prisoners – more than 50 per cent in Carlisle's (1996) sample⁴ - were unable to return to their previous accommodation on release. Among the reasons for this were:

- Relationship breakdown;
- Loss of local authority housing due to duration of sentence;
- Loss of private rented accommodation due to inability to pay rental payments; and
- Loss of privately owned accommodation due to inability to repay mortgages.

“A high proportion of prisoners lost their homes indirectly because of relationship breakdown. Partners left homes that they might have been expected to maintain either on income support as owner-occupier or on housing benefit as tenants. Many ex-prisoners had to cope with the loss of their home, their partner and their job as they attempted to become rehabilitated into the community” (Carlisle, 1996:3)

She found that all ex-prisoners who had been living in private rented accommodation prior to their period of imprisonment had lost their accommodation on release, that all the people who had been staying in hostels, squats or whose accommodation came with their jobs also lost their accommodation and so too did the majority of owner-occupiers.

More recent research for the Rough Sleepers Unit in London found that more than one-third of the respondents in their survey⁵ were unclear as to where they were going to stay on release from prison and many of them had drug or alcohol abuse problems. All of the prisoners who took part in the survey were adamant that appropriate housing was crucial to their ultimate settlement and rehabilitation:

“Housing has always been the basic need first, then you can start to establish a life. It's the first basic need of every prisoner if he's homeless and has nowhere to go” (Alexander et al, 2000: 46).

The above evidence relates primarily to research on adult male prisoners in the UK, yet there is ample evidence to suggest that young offenders face the same difficulties. Research from 1993 found that many young offenders considered that accommodation problems had had a significant impact on their lives and offending behaviour (Stewart & Stewart, 1993), and a 1996 report found that young people living in unstable accommodation conditions were more likely to offend (Audit Commission, 1996).

Housing needs also affect female ex-prisoners. Research undertaken in 1999/2000 found that 43

⁴ The sample included interviews with 175 prisoners shortly before their release and follow-up interviews with 61 prisoners between 4 and 8 months following their release. The methodology also included key informant interviews with 23 professionals involved in helping prisoners to maintain or find accommodation.

⁵ Seventy-one prisoners from 2 prisons in the London area were surveyed while in prison and follow-up interviews with 32 of these prisoners took place between 2 and 4 weeks after their release. A total of 9 professionals working in the prison, probation and housing sectors were also interviewed.

per cent of women included in their survey expected to be homeless on their release from prison (NACRO, 2001). The issue of housing need and the necessity of having appropriate accommodation is even more acute for women who are mothers, as they tend to be the primary care-givers and many want to have their children with them again on release from prison.

Housing is also a key issue for prisoners recently released from prisons in the United States. Federal housing policies permit public housing authorities and other statutorily funded housing associations to deny housing to individuals who have engaged in certain criminal activities including drugs offences, violent criminal offences or “other criminal activity that would negatively affect the health and safety of other residents” (Travis et al, 2001:35). In addition, the breakdown of family relationships during prison sentences and the inability of prisoners to return to their parental or spousal homes following their release from prison also cause housing problems. Indeed **“[T]here is some evidence to suggest, however, that among the many who do return to the family home, these arrangements are often short-lived solutions. One reason is that family members living in public housing may not welcome a returning prisoner home when doing so may put their own housing situation at risk” (Travis et al, 2001:35)**

The consequences of homelessness for ex-prisoners can be profound. For a start they often lose all their possessions as these have gone missing or have been thrown away prior to imprisonment or cannot be secured/taken care of on release. They also have to rejoin housing waiting lists, and for single men and women the likelihood of being housed within 12 months of being released into homelessness is slim. Private rented accommodation, especially in Dublin is increasingly inaccessible, and even with employment may be difficult to afford, as there is a significant scarcity of private rented accommodation at the lower, budget end of the market. Added to the expense of private rented accommodation is the high cost of purchasing basic household items and setting up home. Research by NACRO found that women were being released into far worse situations than they left when entering prison. This meant loss of children into care, loss of personal possessions, financial difficulties and health and substance misuse problems as well as difficulties in accessing both local authority and private rented accommodation.

(b) Employment

A second set of difficulties revolves around employment. It has been found that there is a clear link between ex-offenders unemployment and recidivism, a link that is exacerbated when the ex-offender is homeless. Community safety professionals and criminologists view employment as a key factor in the rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-offenders into the community. Ex-offenders who are homeless face even further difficulties as research from the UK shows that homeless adults face huge difficulties in entering the labour market.

These difficulties include poor basic skills, poor educational records, low self-esteem, behavioural or mental health problems, substance misuse problems and lack of recent work experience. In addition, they may face discrimination from potential employers because of their criminal record. Research among both employers and ex-offenders for NACRO (2000) found that 74 per cent of employers wanted to know about the type(s) of offences committed and 79 per cent would want to know the number of convictions a potential candidate had. In the same study ex-offenders seeking work expressed that the most common barriers to gaining employment were having a criminal record, insufficient qualifications and illness. Research conducted by Alexander et al (2000) also

found that unemployment was a common experience among ex-offenders, due to poor qualifications and low basic skills including difficulties with literacy and numeracy. Those who had been employed had worked in jobs that tended to be unskilled, low paid and casual.

Research into the employment seeking efforts of homeless people also highlight the barriers that they face. Homeless adults tend to have poor educational backgrounds, chaotic lifestyles, and low skill levels impeding their entry into the labour market; and they face the additional problem of unstable accommodation that can militate against holding a steady job. Research by Randall and Brown (1999) found that housing problems further damaged homeless young peoples' attempts to enter the labour market. Those who were sleeping rough were found to have little chance of gaining employment and even those staying in hostels faced difficulties in holding down a job. Hostel regimes sometimes acted as a disincentive to obtaining and holding down a job. The absence of a work culture in hostels, the clocking in and clocking out regimes in some hostels and the phased withdrawal of housing benefits if work was found were all recorded as barriers to obtaining and maintaining employment.

Thus ex-offenders who are homeless face a double set of barriers including their criminal records, their low skill levels, their lack of recent work experience and the instability of their accommodation.

(c) Addiction Issues

Ex-prisoners also encounter a serious set of problems with drug and alcohol addiction. Evidence from recent Irish research among both male and female prisoner populations indicates high levels of previous problem drug-use (see The Centre for Health Promotion Studies, 2000; O'Mahoney, 1997; Carmody & McEvoy, 1996). Heroin use is high among male and female prisoners, 30 per cent of males and 56 per cent of females reported using heroin in the 12 months prior to the recent Healthcare Study of the Irish Prisoner Population (The Centre for Health Promotion Studies, 2000). Fifty-one per cent of male and 69 per cent of female prisoners were under the influence of drugs when they committed the crime for which they were imprisoned (The Centre for Health Promotion Studies, 2000). Research by Cox and Lawless for Merchant's Quay Ireland found that 65 per cent of male and 26 per cent of their female homeless drug using clients had served a prison sentence or had been on remand (1999).

These problems are serious barriers to the re-integration of homeless ex-offenders into the wider community. Problem drug use has been identified in a number of studies as a barrier to successful rehabilitation for ex-offenders but the issue of access to treatment and continuity of treatment continues to be a problem for them. Research in London found that none of the prisoners with substance abuse problems had had their ongoing care and support needs assessed before leaving prison: **"I went on a detox programme when I was inside and I wanted help to get something on the outside about alcoholism but they couldn't help"** (Alexander et al, 2000:43).

Conclusion

A review of literature from Ireland, England, and North America indicates that the linkages between homelessness and crime are not straightforward. They are in fact very complex. A variety of

factors have been found to lead to offending behaviour and homelessness including poverty, social deprivation, drug and alcohol misuse, family breakdown and mental ill health. The criminal behaviour of those who are homeless is often characterised by the survivalist nature of the crimes they commit e.g. begging, shop lifting and other types of larceny and by crime carried out to escape the physical reality of homelessness e.g. drug and alcohol related offences. The international literature shows that criminal behaviour that results in a prison sentence can lead directly to homelessness as family relationships break-down during the length of the sentence, and private rented, local authority or owner-occupier housing is lost as the prisoner is unable to maintain rental or mortgage payments. Once in the homeless cycle, problems ordinarily faced by ex-offenders, such as gaining employment and addressing addiction issues, are exacerbated.

Chapter 3

Research Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the main survey, that of homeless ex-offenders. The findings are organised around the main themes of chapters one and two:

- Demographic findings
- Homelessness and crime
- Crime and Drug Use
- Crime and Alcohol Use
- Re-offending Behaviour
- Access to Information

Socio-Demographic Details

A total of 46 adults participated in the study, 32 men and 14 women. The majority of respondents were aged between 18 and 25 years, a reflection in part of the age group with which Focus Ireland's Street Outreach team works. The older respondents were identified by PACE (whose work includes people who have had longer periods of imprisonment) and through Focus Ireland's Coffee Shop. Fifteen men and 10 women were aged between 18 and 25, a further 9 men and 4 women were aged between 26 and 40 and 8 men were aged 41 years or older, 7 between the ages of 41 and 60 and one aged over 61.

Table 3.1 Age Categories By Gender

	18-25	26-40	41-60	61+
Male	15	9	7	1
Female	10	4	-	-
Total	25	13	7	1

While the high number of respondents in the 18-25 year category may reflect some sampling bias, it does echo findings from other research conducted on the Irish prison population. For example both The Centre for Health Promotion Studies (2000) study of the health status of the prisoner population and O'Mahoney's (1997) profile of Mountjoy prisoners found that a significant percentage of prisoners were less than 30 years of age.

Two women were reported as married, 5 were reported as lone parents, 2 were divorced/separated or widowed and 5 women were single. In contrast 21 men were single, 5 currently married and 6 men were divorced/separated or widowed. Although 21 men self-reported as single/never married, 18 men did have children.

Table 3.2 Marital Status by Gender

	Single	Married	Lone Parent	Div/Sep/Wid	Total
Male	21	5	-	6	32
Female	5	2	5	2	14
Total	26	7	5	8	46

The information obtained from respondents on their place of origin, shows that a significant number of respondents were from areas characterised by social and physical deprivation. This characterisation is based on the “Deprivation Index”, recently developed by the Small Area Health Research Unit of Trinity College, Dublin. This defines deprivation as an “observable and demonstrable disadvantage to the local community to which an individual belongs” (SAHRU, 1997:1). The concept refers to the physical and social conditions in an area rather than to the level of resources of individuals within it, so people can be living in deprived areas but not necessarily be living in poverty (SAHRU, 1997). Five indicators have been used in drawing up the deprivation index and these are:

- i) Proportion of the economically active population (15-64 years) unemployed or seeking a 1st time job;
- ii) Proportion of the population in the lowest social classes, i.e. 5 and 6;
- iii) Proportion of permanent private households with no car;
- iv) Proportion of permanent private households renting privately or from a County Council, or in the process of acquiring from a County Council; and
- v) The average number of persons per room in permanent private housing units, overcrowded accommodation reflects living circumstances and housing conditions.

Using these five indicators, researchers were able to develop national and regional deprivation indices, deprivation indices for each District Electoral Division (DED) are also available. The scoring procedure is as follows; 1 reflects the least deprived while 5 refers to the most deprived. For example, the North and South Inner city DEDs indicate average scores of between 4 and 5. Five of the six Crumlin DEDs score 4 on the index; three of the five Cabra DEDs score 3.

Table 3.3 Place of Origin

Area	Male	Female	TOTAL
North Inner City	2	4	6
South Inner City	3	2	5
Tallaght	1	2	3
Ballyfermot	3	1	4
Clondalkin	4	2	6
Darndale/Coolock	4	-	4
Other Dublin	8	3	11
Rest of Ireland	5	-	5
United Kingdom	2	-	2
TOTAL	32	14	46

Other Dublin includes: Cabra, Crumlin, Blanchardstown, Ballymun, Dun Laoghaire & Rathfarnham

The sample was also characterised by early school leaving and by low levels of educational attainment, which resulted in high levels of educational disadvantage. The most common age for leaving school was 14, and age of school leaving ranged from 8 to 20 years. Seventeen of the respondents, some 12 men and 5 women had completed primary school only, while 24, 15 men and 9 women, had participated in some secondary level education. Only 5 of the 46 respondents (11 per cent) had completed secondary school to Leaving Certificate level. All of these were men.

Table 3.4 Educational Attainment by Gender

	Primary	Some secondary	Leaving Cert	Diploma/Degree	Total
Male	12	15	4	1	32
Female	5	9	-	-	14
Total	17	24	4	1	46

The source of income for respondents prior to their period of imprisonment shows the majority were dependant on social welfare payments including lone parents allowance, unemployment benefit and assistance and disability benefit. All of the women interviewed reported that a social welfare payment was their main source of income. In contrast, 2 men were in formal training and/or education programmes, 9 men were employed prior to their term of imprisonment, one had been retired and 2 men reported their source of income as begging (tapping).

Table 3.5 Source of Income by Gender

	Training/ Education	Employed	Social Welfare	Retirement	Begging
Male	2	9	17	1	2
Female	-	-	14	-	-
Total	2	9	31	1	2

A total of 27 respondents (including 18 men who reported their family status as single) had 66 children. Twelve respondents had only one child, 6 respondents had 2 children, 2 had 3 children and 7 respondents had 4 or more children. The age range of the children was from less than 1 year to 35 years.

Table 3.6 Number of Children

Number of Respondents with Children	Number of children	Total Number of Children
12	1 child	12
6	2 children	12
2	3 children	6
7	4+ children	36

The average number of children per respondent was 2.44 with family size ranging from 1 to 6 children (3 men had 6 children each).

Overall those in the sample were characterised by significant levels of social, economic and educational exclusion. These were indicated by poor educational attainment rates, high levels of dependency on social welfare payments and by the deprivation rates in the areas from which the respondents come.

Homelessness and Crime

“Of course you are going to get into trouble if you don’t have nowhere to live, they go hand in hand” (Damian, 21)

A central part of the remit of the study was to examine the relationship between crime and homelessness, as perceived by those in the study. To this end a series of questions were asked of respondents regarding their experiences of being homeless and the linkages they themselves perceived between homelessness and crime.

An analysis of the data allows the identification of two distinct sets of experiences of crime and homelessness, though given the limited nature of the data, this analysis must remain somewhat tentative. The first group is those who were homeless prior to their first term of imprisonment, while the second group is made up of those who became homeless after their release from prison. These differ most significantly in terms of the nature of the offences that they have committed. The first group would appear to have committed minor offences, so called survivalist crimes including vagrancy, shoplifting and public order offences and so their homeless status may have caused both their crimes and their subsequent imprisonment. The second group, by contrast had committed more serious crimes, including drugs and sex offences, and it may have been the serious nature of their offending and the length of their imprisonment that have contributed to their homelessness. These differences are set out in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7

Homeless Prior to 1st Term of Imprisonment	Homeless After 1st Term of Imprisonment
Average age when first homeless was 14.89 years	Average age when first homeless was 23.62 years
Average length of time in prison was 3.4 years	Average length of time in prison was 7.7 years
Range of offences included vagrancy, drug offences and larceny	Range of offences included murder, armed robbery, drugs offences and larceny

Let us look in some more detail at these two groups.

(i) Those Homeless Prior to Prison

Less than half of the respondents participating in the survey were homeless prior to their first term of imprisonment. This suggests that homelessness alone is not necessarily a predictor for offending behaviour among our sample and that other factors are at play. What is clear from the data is that those who were homeless prior to their first term of imprisonment had experienced

homelessness or periods of homelessness from a very young age. It is also clear that the types of crimes committed by these offenders were generally of a non-indictable and non-violent nature. The majority of them, for example, had at least one vagrancy offence against them.

Table 3.8 Types of Offences Committed

	Drugs offences	Larceny/Burglary	Vagrancy	Shoplifting	Robbery	D&D	Other
Homeless Prior to 1st Term of Imprisonment	5	15	8	6	3	2	1
Homeless After 1st Term of Imprisonment	4	16	5	6	3	2	9
Total	9	31	13	12	6	4	10

The majority also felt there was a direct connection between homelessness and the fact that they had committed an offence. Approximately 20 respondents (62 per cent) said that their crime had been committed to survive on the streets - survivalist crimes. These crimes included shoplifting, larceny, begging and squatting.

Richard, now 29 years old and originally from the UK, is currently living in a probation hostel. He has been in and out of juvenile detention centres and adult prisons since his early teens and has lived rough in both Ireland and the UK for a number of years. During his time sleeping rough, Richard's personal belongings have been stolen from him. Richard believes that there is a direct link between the crimes he has committed, which have included shoplifting and being drunk and disorderly, and his homelessness. He believes that his crimes were committed to survive living on the streets.

Six respondents (16 per cent) reported that their street-life led to drug misuse and their drug addiction led to committing a crime including mugging, burglary and shoplifting⁶. Approximately 7 respondents (19 per cent) reported that their drug use led to their homelessness, through loss of private accommodation, family conflict or relationship breakdown, and was a pathway to committing an offence under the law.

(ii) Homeless after Prison

A total of 24 respondents had not been homeless prior to their first term of imprisonment. The offences committed by those respondents made homeless after their release from prison were generally more serious in nature e.g. armed robbery, murder, drugs and sexual offences (see Table 3.8). Of the 24 respondents living in settled accommodation prior to their imprisonment, only 5 returned to their former residence immediately after their release; four to their parent's home and one to their partner's home. In each case this accommodation arrangement soon broke down.

For the most part, these respondents see a clear relationship between release from prison and homelessness. The time in prison contributed, among other things, to their homelessness on

⁶ Drug and alcohol misuse will be discussed in greater detail in later sections.

release as for example, they had lost private rented accommodation or local authority housing during their imprisonment. A number of respondents also reported that difficult family and/or marital relationships were further weakened by periods of time spent in prison.

Jennifer, now 19 has been sleeping rough for 12 months. Placed in foster care as a result of the death of her parents, she was convicted for a number of offences including prostitution and stealing, a result, she says of her problem drug use. Jennifer sees a definite link between her committal to prison and her subsequent homelessness "when I went to prison all my family abandoned me and my baby was taken from me, all my life was ruined". Jennifer does not hold out much hope for reconciliation with her family. "There were difficulties that have not been resolved and are still not resolved because I am a drug user and have been in custody, they [foster family] will not accept this".

However it must be acknowledged that while the two groups differ in terms of their route to homelessness and prison, they have similar sets of problems. One of these was the early age at which they had contact with the judicial system. In fact, 41 per cent of respondents who had been homeless prior to their first term were on remand for the first time before the age of 18 while just over half (54 per cent) of those in settled accommodation prior to their first term of imprisonment had been placed on remand for the first time when they were less than 18 years.

The other common problem is drug abuse. This becomes clear when we look at how respondents reported on the perceived connections between their criminal behaviour and variables such as alcohol and/or drugs misuse. This is dealt with in the next section.

Crime and Drug Misuse

"I was always out if it, [I] needed drugs to cope with life and could not remember one day to next, if not out of it I still stole in order to survive living on the streets" (Mark, 29).

A total of 42 respondents had used illegal drugs including hash/cannabis, heroin and cocaine and prescribed medications at some time in their lives. Thirty-one are currently misusing drugs. There was little difference between the men and the women in terms of drug use. Twenty-nine (90 per cent) male respondents and 13 (93 per cent) female respondents had ever or were currently using illegal drugs. Poly-drug use⁷ was rife with 36 (86 per cent) past users and 22 (68 per cent) current users misusing two or more drugs. Of particular concern is the abuse of prescribed medications including sleeping tablets and anti-depressant medications. Common combinations included heroin in conjunction with methadone and other illegal drugs including cannabis.

Frank felt that the only way out of his violent and addictive family home was the streets "The drinking got too much for me so I left, that's when I started using drugs". When Frank first left home he was sleeping in a car, he is now dossing with friends and moves around a lot. Frank has been in prison 3 times, for offences ranging from drug dealing to shoplifting and he says that he never let the prison authorities know that he had nowhere to go, as, he says, he would have been denied temporary release. Frank has no contact with his family.

⁷ The term poly-drug use indicates that one or more drugs are being misused in conjunction with each other.

Maria first got into trouble with the authorities at the age of 17 because, she says , of her drug habit. Although her first conviction, at age 17, occurred before her first time out-of-home, she believes that it was her behaviour and her drug habit that led to her homelessness. Because of her drug addiction, she lost custody of her children and the relationship between herself and her parents irretrievably broke down.

Maria began a spate of criminal activity including shoplifting, mugging and begging to finance her drug habit. Maria says that once she experienced prison, she subsequently "got caught, prison is better than being homeless".

Thirty-seven (88 per cent) current and past drug users perceived that their criminal behaviour was directly linked with their drug misuse. Of those 37 respondents who reported a link, 35 (95 per cent) reported that their crime was committed in order to finance their habit. Offences included burglary, robbery, drug dealing, solicitation, begging and mugging.

Crime and Alcohol Misuse

Although 33 respondents (78 per cent) reported that they drink alcohol, only 16 (48 per cent) perceived a direct relationship between the offence committed and their alcohol use. Seven (44 per cent) of those who reported a direct link between their criminal activity and their alcohol use stated that their drunken behaviour led to the offence being committed. Five respondents (31 per cent) reported that they committed their offence to finance their alcohol addiction and 3 respondents (19 per cent) were arrested for being drunk and disorderly. In a manner similar to those who abused drugs, respondents with alcohol problems saw the consumption of alcohol as a "way out" of the misery and isolation of homelessness.

John, now 42, was sent to an industrial school at the age of 12. Following his release from there he became involved in crime and has been convicted approximately 30 times, for among other things breaking and entering, car theft and theft of property. He has spent roughly 17 years in some kind of institutional setting since the age of 12. John inherited the family home following his father's death but due to his alcoholism he failed to make the necessary payments on the house to keep it. Although he does have a cordial relationship with his sister, her own family circumstances preclude him from staying with her. John says "I have no value for money or myself when living on the outside and when I feel that I can't cope on the outside, I re-offend to get caught".

For the majority of respondents it was simply not a case of their drug use alone or the fact that they were homeless that lead to their criminal behaviour. Rather what participants in this study reported was a complex combination of factors, not mutually exclusive. As can be seen from the questionnaire findings and the case studies presented above, the lives of many of the respondents were characterised by low education levels, family breakdown, dysfunctional family/marital relationships, personal drug or alcohol abuse or addictive behaviour of a family member or partner and unemployment.

Re-offending Behaviour

“People that offend and go to prison and then they are let go and then back again and let go – someone should sit down and ask, why is this person in and out. They don’t want to go to prison” (Jason, 24).

The issue of re-offending behaviour was also explored in the study. Participants were asked to reflect on the reasons for their re-offending. A total of 40 respondents were convicted of more than one crime and had been in prison on more than one occasion. The average length of time spent in prison was 72 months. The 6 respondents sentenced to 10 or more years skewed the distribution somewhat, and after removing them from the analysis, the most common length of time spent in prison was 24 months. Twenty-eight respondents with more than one conviction were of the opinion that their drug addiction contributed directly to their re-offending behaviour.

Jason has experienced episodic homelessness since the age of 13 because of his difficult home life; his mother suffers from mental ill health. First sentenced to prison at age 22, Jason has been convicted on 3 occasions for among other things stealing and shoplifting. He has been homeless between each of his 3 sentences. “I was homeless, I was in a bad state of depression. I believe that the drugs and me past are a lot of the reason for crime. When you are homeless you don’t have a lot to do, steal, steal alcohol, drugs, buy drugs, end up selling drugs”. Jason also feels that “prison made [my] problems worse – I was more depressed. You have to be hard in prison, [you] can’t be showing emotions, [I] knew already that I would go back for longer”. Jason says that they [prison authorities] “didn’t even hand me a number of a hostel – they didn’t ask if I had a place to go”.

Eighteen respondents reported that homelessness had directly contributed to their re-offending behaviour. As they returned to street living, staying in emergency accommodation or dossing with friends they became involved in survivalist crimes once more e.g. shoplifting, drunk and disorderly and vagrancy offences.

Martin became homeless at age 64 following his release from prison. He spent almost 5 years in Arbour Hill prison. Martin’s marriage ended as a result of his criminal behaviour and his relationship with his adult children has completely broken down, “they didn’t want me, for all they know, I could be in Timbuktu”. Although currently staying in a Dublin hostel, Martin, originally from Munster, feels alone and isolated “How am I going to start a life for myself? I did the crime and I did the time, and now I’m out and at 64 I’m homeless for the first time. What else can I do – I can’t look back, just go on”.

Eight (20 per cent) respondents identified family conflict and/or lack of family support as a contributing factor to their re-offending. Thirty-six (36) of the respondents had maintained some sort of contact with their families during their time in prison. However, after their release a further 3 respondents lost contact with their families. For those in contact with their families, 14 had weekly contact in the form of visits, letters or phone calls, 9 had contact with their families every

couple of weeks, and for 7 respondents contact was sporadic. The lack of family support networks available to respondents was a familiar and recurring element in a significant number of interviews. In 13 cases of non-contact, the rupture in the family relationship was so serious that salvaging any kind of relationship was virtually impossible. The majority of respondents indicated some level of strain, and as can be seen above, 13 of those relationships had completely broken down during their period of imprisonment or immediately afterwards.

Robert, now 43, has served approximately 15 years in prison. He became homeless after the breakdown of his marriage and had nowhere to live on his release from prison. For Robert the most difficult aspect of leaving prison was coping with life on the "outside". He found it hard to cope because of difficulties around opening a bank account because of his homelessness, the feelings of alienation from family, friends and his community, Robert says "it's embarrassing because it seems everywhere you go you have to declare the prison sentence".

While relationships with immediate family had often broken down irretrievably, it was interesting to note that relationships with grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins often continued and provided some measure of support; physical, financial and/or emotional. In some cases, the nature or seriousness of the crime committed led to family and/or marital relationship breakdown.

Eleven (27 per cent) respondents said that coping difficulties were a key factor in their re-offending behaviour. This phenomenon was particularly acute for those ex-offenders who had spent long periods in prison or who had a history of institutional care from a young age. Independent living and life on the "outside" was perceived as sometimes too difficult to cope with. These feelings of being unable to cope often occurred where there was no family support or social support networks and the respondents felt isolated and alone upon their release from prison.

The most common reasons for re-offending emerging from this study included:

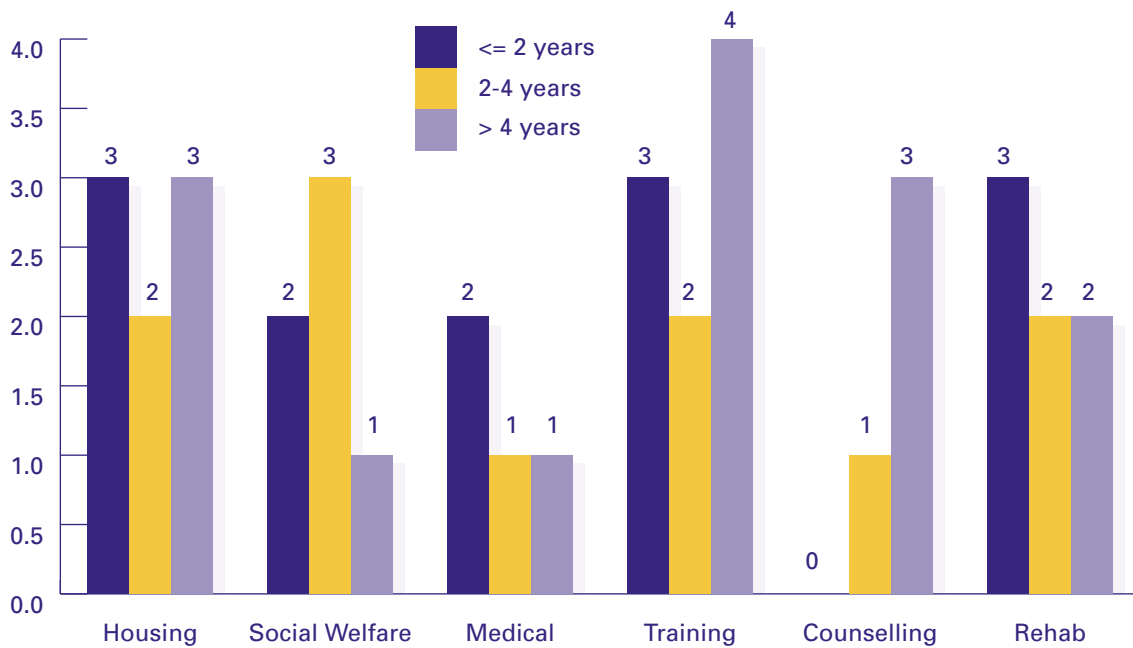
- Unsettled family backgrounds including incidences of parental ill-health, alcoholism, drug misuse and violence in the home
- Feelings of institutionalisation and inability to cope in the "outside" world
- Personal drug and alcohol dependency
- Homelessness

Having explored some of the linkages that participants in this study perceived between crime, prison and homelessness, the next phase of the presentation of results deals with the support services prisoners had access to and used when in prison and with the particular needs they felt they had on being released.

Access to Information and Advice

A key element of this research study was to investigate the types of information and advice services available to people during their sentence, in preparation for release and after their release from prison. The results below show low levels of receipt of information and advice while in prison. Few prisoners, either short-term or long-term, received information and advice during their sentences or in preparation for release from prison.

Figure 3.1 Receipt of Information/Advice While in Prison According to Length of Sentence

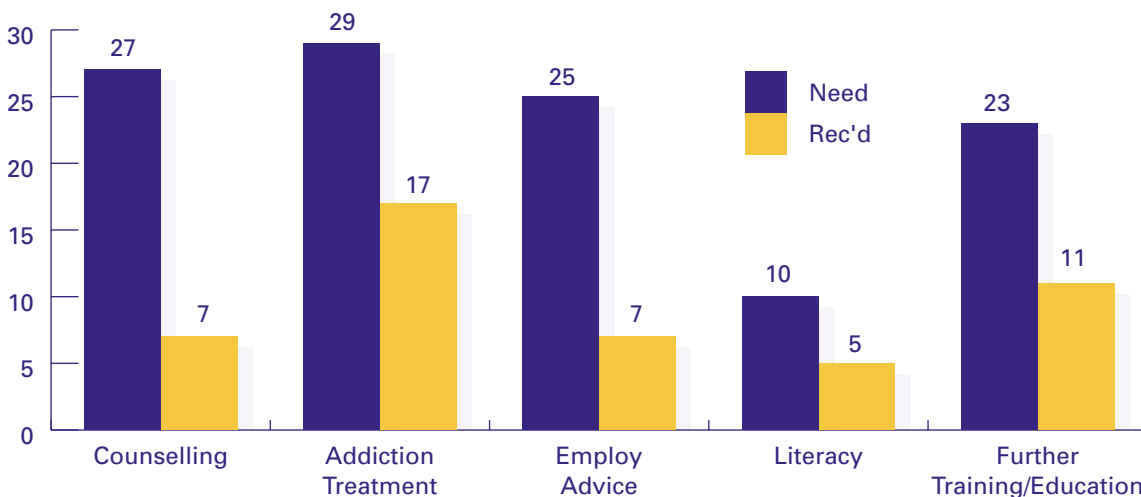


As can be seen from the figure 3.1 a maximum of 3 prisoners with sentences of less 2 years received information and advice from the prison service during their time in prison. A maximum of 3 prisoners with sentences of between 2 and 4 years received advice and a maximum of 4 prisoners with sentences of more than 4 years received information and advice. The current practice in terms of provision of information and advice falls short of the needs of most soon-to-be-released prisoners

Access to Services and Information Post Release

Respondents were also asked to report access to any services after their release from prison. This was somewhat better than access during their sentence. However, there were significant discrepancies between the needs identified by ex-offenders and the services they actually received.

Figure 3.2 Access to Services and Information Post Release

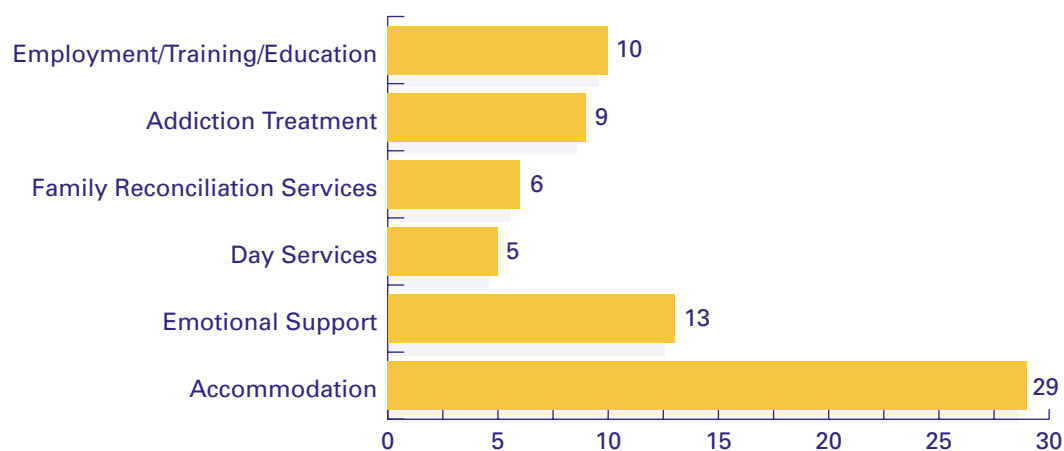


A total of 27 respondents (59 per cent) required counselling, 29 (63 per cent) needed addiction treatment and 25 (54 per cent) needed employment advice on their release from prison. Counselling refers to therapeutic counselling to address issues of drug and/or alcohol dependency, issues of family conflict, self-esteem, histories of physical and/or sexual abuse etc. Addiction treatment refers to methadone maintenance programmes available through the health boards. Approximately 10 people (22 per cent) needed literacy training and a further 23 (50 per cent) required further training and/or education. However, the level of met need was especially low in relation to counselling and employment advice, with only 26 per cent and 28 per cent respectively receiving any information or advice about either one. It is important to stress that the perceived need above relates to the needs identified by the ex-offenders themselves and not needs identified in any pre-release assessment or plan.

Forty-two respondents had contact with at least one voluntary organisation following their release from prison. Most commonly contacted services included Focus Ireland (27), Merchant's Quay Ireland (27), PACE (13), Ana Liffey (9), Dublin Simon Community (16) and the St Vincent de Paul (6).

Respondents identified a range of practical needs in their immediate post-release period (figure 3.3). The majority (29 respondents) reported that accommodation needs were paramount, while the need for addiction treatment; family reconciliation services and emotional support in the form of counselling were also reported by 9, 6 and 13 respondents respectively.

Figure 3.3 Practical Needs as Identified by Respondents

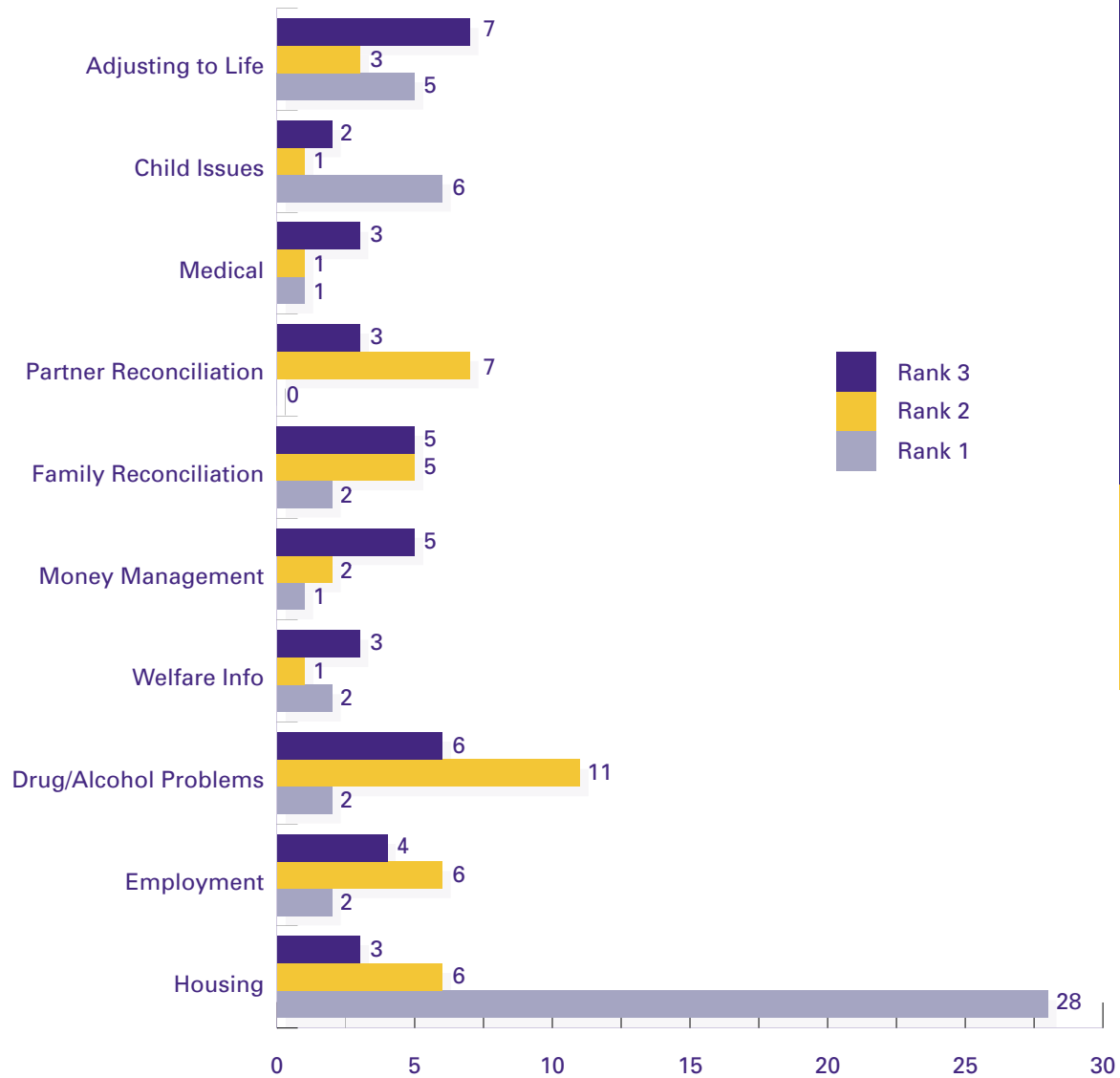


It is interesting to note that the type of practical needs identified by respondents did not differ between the sexes. Both men and women equally found accommodation problems to be the most pressing, and both men and women found the need for emotional support and family reconciliation services to be important.

Respondents were also asked to rank the three main difficulties that they faced on leaving prison. Unsurprisingly, 37 respondents ranked housing and 20 respondents ranked accessing drug and/or alcohol treatment programmes in the top 3 difficulties that they had to face on leaving prison. "Generally adjusting" to life was ranked within the top three difficulties experienced on release from prison by 15 respondents. While partner reconciliation was not the number one difficulty experienced by ex-prisoners, 7 respondents ranked it at number two and 3 respondents reported

that it was the third main difficulty that they experienced post-release. Child care issues including resuming contact and care of children was the number one difficulty for 6 respondents while a further 1 and 2 respondents ranked this problem at 2 and 3 respectively. The figure below (Figure 3.4) details the way in which respondents ranked their various difficulties.

Figure 3.4 Main Difficulties Experienced on Release from Prison: Ranked 1-3



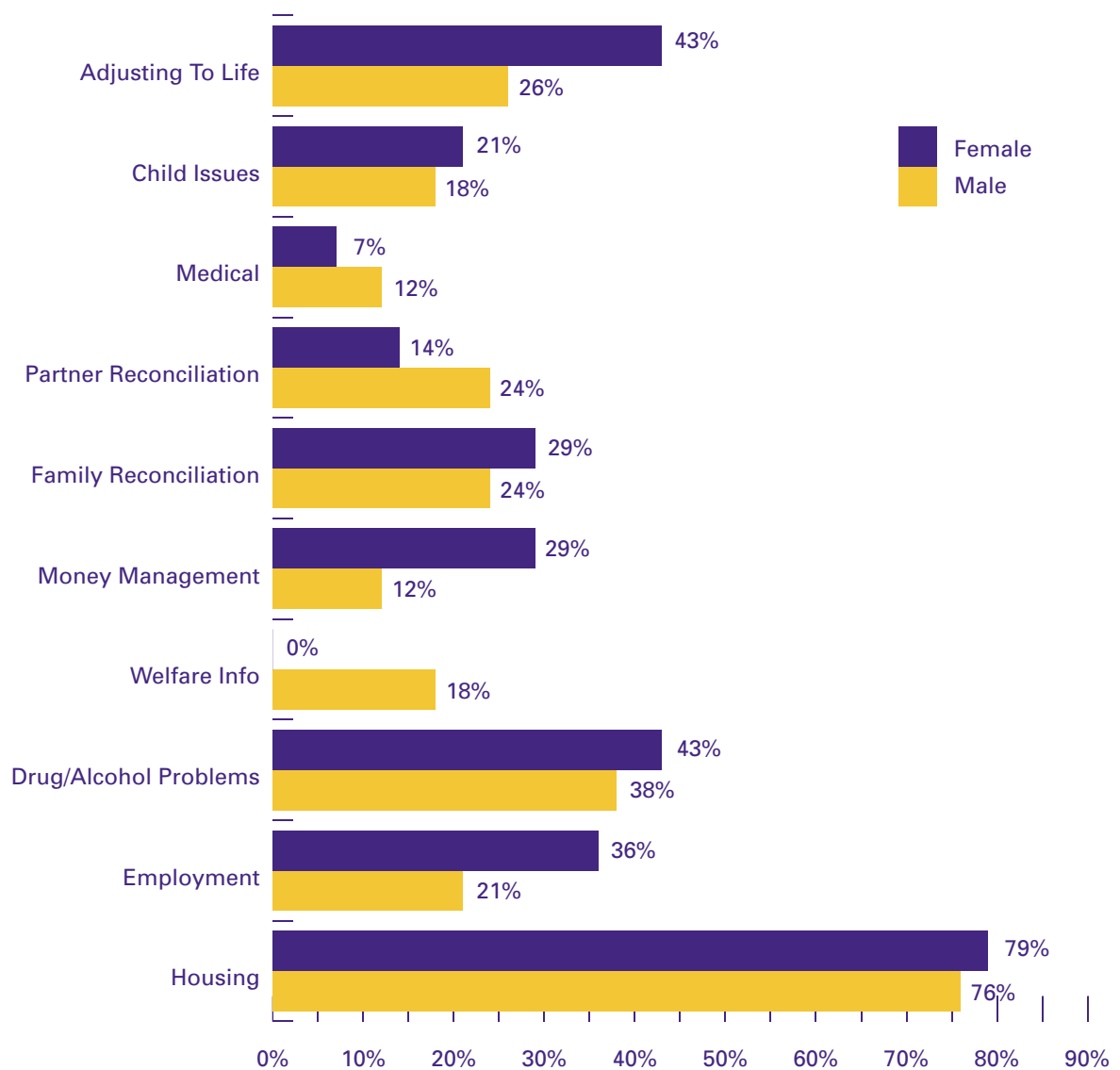
There were some differences between how men and women ranked the main difficulties that they experienced on release from prison (see figure 3.5). However, 24 male respondents (76 per cent) and 11 women (79 per cent) ranked accessing and securing accommodation in the top 3 difficulties that they faced. The issue of access to drug and alcohol treatment programmes was equally important for men and women. Eleven men (33 per cent) and 6 women (43 per cent) ranked access to drug and/or alcohol treatment programmes in the top three. This finding demonstrates the very real desire of respondents to deal with their drug and alcohol addiction in order to address both their criminal behaviour and their state of homelessness.

As was discussed earlier, the absence of family support networks is apparent (figure 3.5) among this sample in that 8 men (24 per cent) and 4 women (29 per cent), ranked reconciliation as a major

difficulty for them in the immediate post-release phase. The discussion in earlier sections of this chapter illustrates how a range of issues including the nature of the criminal activity, the time spent in prison and/or drug and alcohol abuse, can fracture family relationships. Strong support networks including family support have proven to be important in reducing recidivism and improving re-integration. The respondents in this survey recognise the importance of family and rely on them for both emotional and physical support. It can also be seen from figure 3.5 below that both of the married women ranked reconciliation with their partner in the top 3 difficulties faced. However, it is interesting to note that neither of them ranked reconciliation with their partner as the main difficulty. Six men (18 per cent) ranked maintaining contact with their children in the top 3 difficulties, although 18 of them had children. Three out of the 9 mothers included in the study ranked caring for and/or maintaining contact with their children in the top 3 difficulties that they faced on leaving prison.

The figure below highlights the gender differences in the ranking of the difficulties faced.

Figure 3.5 Main Difficulties (Ranked in Top 3) Experienced on Release from Prison by Gender



It is interesting to note that female respondents (6 out of 14 or 43 per cent of women) ranked more highly the difficulty of “generally adjusting to life outside” as opposed to just 8 out of 32 (26 per cent) men. There may be a number of reasons for this including the disparity between the level of support and advice available to women when in the Dochas Centre and that available to them once released. In addition, the needs of women can be more complex and demanding in terms of co-ordinating services and supports, particularly where women have children and are the primary carer givers.

Despite the limited availability of addiction treatment services, medical services and training and education within the prisons, these needs are still evident and require continued attention following release from prison.

Chapter 4

Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this research has been two-fold. One has been to explore the nature of the linkages between homelessness and crime. This has not been researched to any great degree in Ireland and the linkages that have been made between the two have largely been at an anecdotal level. The second aim has been to examine the experiences of men and women leaving prison and to suggest ways in which their needs could be more adequately met. In this section we summarise the results of the research and in the next one we discuss the range of policy proposals that follow from them.

Summary of Research Findings

(i) Socio-Demographic Indicators

The participants in the research were characterised by low educational attainment levels, high levels of unemployment, family breakdown/dysfunction, and histories of drug and/or alcohol abuse.

(ii) Homelessness and Crime

This study shows that the relationship between homelessness and crime is a complex one. Homelessness did not inevitably lead to criminal behaviour among the sample. For some (less than half the sample) being homeless led to crime which in turn led to imprisonment. For others it was being released from prison that led directly to homelessness. They also had different patterns of offending. The type of crimes committed by those homeless prior to their first term of imprisonment shows a preponderance of vagrancy, larceny and drug offences. This is in contrast to the more “serious” crimes committed by those homeless after a period of imprisonment.

However both groups - those homeless prior to and those homeless after their experience in prison - had had contact with the judicial system from an early age. Forty-one per cent of respondents who had been homeless prior to their first term of imprisonment were on remand for the first time before the age of 18 and 54 per cent of those settled prior to their first term of imprisonment as an adult had been placed on remand for the first time when they were less than 18 years.

The differences between the two groups carried over into the issue of relationship breakdown. Relationship breakdown with immediate family or partner/spouse was common to both groups, but the reasons for the breakdown were different. Those in settled accommodation prior to their term of imprisonment identified the type and nature of the crime they committed as the reason for

their relationship breakdown. Those homeless prior to their committal to prison identified other reasons for relationship breakdown such as mental ill health (their own or that of a member of the family), drug addiction (their own or a member of the family), domestic violence or the threat of anti-social eviction. The differences also carried over into the reasons why they became homeless. The reasons for homelessness among those who were on the streets prior to their imprisonment were similar to the reasons for the breakdown in their relationship. But for those homeless following a period of imprisonment there were additional reasons that included the loss of private rented accommodation or the loss of local authority housing during their imprisonment

(iii) Other Contributory Factors

Respondents in both groups reported a variety of factors that contributed to their homelessness and their criminal behaviour. These included histories of residential child-care, family dysfunction or breakdown, mental ill health, drug misuse and alcohol addiction.

Thirty-seven respondents reported that their criminal behaviour was directly linked with their drug misuse, and 35 of them (95 per cent) reported that they had committed their offence in order to finance their drug habit. The life experiences reported by the respondents were echoed in the discussions with professionals working in the welfare and prison services and voluntary organisations. All of these recognised drugs as a major factor in offending behaviour.

The issue of alcohol misuse is also important. Sixteen respondents reported a direct link between their alcohol consumption and their offending behaviour. Seven participants reported that their drunken behaviour led to the offence being committed; these offences included Grievous Bodily Harm (GBH) and other types of assault. A further 3 participants had been arrested on drunk and disorderly charges.

(iv) Re-offending Behaviour

A total of 40 of the respondents were convicted of more than one crime and had been in prison on more than one occasion. The average length of total time spent in prison was 72 months. However, many of the respondents were sentenced to short periods of time in prison on a number of occasions. Sentences ranged from between 6 months and 2 years for non-violent crimes.

The key issues that respondents perceived to have contributed to their re-offending behaviour included breakdown of family/partner relationships, the coping difficulties associated with independent living after a period of institutionalisation, and drug and alcohol addiction.

Coping difficulties was felt by 12 respondents (27 per cent) and was most acute among those who had spent long periods of time in prison or who had a history of residential care from a young age. In addition to losing their coping skills, many long-term prisoners had also lost contact with their families of origin or relationships with partners/spouses had irretrievably broken down. Respondents felt isolated and alone upon their release from prison.

However the most important factor cited for re-offending behaviour was drug addiction. Forty-six per cent of respondents reported that homelessness had directly contributed to their offending behaviour, through committing survivalist crimes or the inability to abstain from drug taking when living on the street. The inability to maintain addiction treatment following release from prison

was also a significant problem for respondents and this was commented on by key informant interviewees. Homelessness made drug treatment programmes even more difficult to access, as provision is based on catchment area and possession of a permanent address.

(v) Access to and Provision of Information and Advice

The survey found that rates of access to information and advice on release from prison were significantly higher than rates of access while in prison. There were also notable discrepancies between the identified needs of prisoners and the level of support they received. The most common immediate and practical need identified by respondents was accommodation; in addition they reported the need for addiction treatment, family reconciliation services, employment advice, further training and education, and emotional support in the form of counselling. Unfortunately, the level of met need was especially low. For example, 27 respondents required counselling only 6 received it, 29 respondents identified addiction treatment as a need only 16 received it and 25 respondents required employment advice and only 6 received it.

There was little difference between the needs of female and male ex-offenders. The main difficulties faced by the men and women leaving prison proved to be housing, addiction treatment, family/partner reconciliation, employment and “generally adjusting to life”. It is interesting to note that female respondents (46 per cent of women or 6 out of 14) ranked more highly the difficulty of “generally adjusting to life outside” as opposed to just 26 per cent of men. There may be a number of reasons for this including the disparity between the level of support and advice available to them when in the Dochas Centre (female prison) and that available to them once released. In addition, the needs of women can be more complex and demanding in terms of co-ordinating services and supports, particularly where women have children and are the primary carer givers.

Discussion

For the majority of respondents it was simply not a case of their homelessness, their drug use or their alcohol misuse that led to the offending behaviour. The findings from this small-scale study indicate a number of pathways into homelessness and a variety of complex relationships between homelessness and the committal of a crime, and between release from prison and entering a cycle of homelessness, crime and re-offending behaviour. For some homelessness contributed to their offending behaviour through the criminalisation of certain behaviours such as public order offences like being drunk and disorderly and vagrancy, the adoption of criminal behaviour for street survival such as shop lifting, and their development of addictions to cope with the isolation, insecurity and difficulties of being homeless. These returned to a state of homelessness after their imprisonment.

For others it was criminal behaviour that led to homelessness, most crucially because the nature of the offences for which they were imprisoned led to a break-up of their relationships and their time in prison led to a loss of accommodation. However in addition both groups had drug and/or alcohol addiction and mental ill health problems to contend with and these contributed to and exacerbated their problems of homelessness and in turn had an influence on their likelihood of reoffending.

Recommendations

The recommendations suggested in this section are based on the findings of the research supplemented by the interviews and discussions held with both statutory and voluntary service providers. They are broken down under a number of headings including:

1. Custodial and Non-Custodial Sanctions
2. Services while in prison
3. Post-release needs
4. Interaction with other developments
5. Information systems

Custodial and Non-Custodial Sanctions

This research shows that the imposition of custodial sentences for relatively minor offences led to family and spousal relationship destabilisation and accommodation and employment loss. Many of the respondents had experienced periods in prison for offences such as vagrancy, public disorder and larceny. In addition, the “survivalist” nature of these crimes indicates that the criminal behaviour is not always predatory but based on subsistence and need. This suggests that custodial sentences might not always be appropriate for such offenders. They bring them into contact with more serious criminals and many become part of a “revolving door” syndrome, of many convictions and short sentences. This means they are unable to avail of the limited educational and developmental services available in the prisons.

1. There needs to be a review of the use of custodial sentences as part of our judicial system for people who are homeless. Committal to prison should be viewed as a “punishment of last resort”. Other options available or that should be made available that would be relevant to homeless individuals include treatment orders, mediation orders, counselling orders, combination orders, suspended sentences, community service orders and probation orders (NESF, 2002).
2. If custodial sentencing is to continue as the punishment of choice by the courts, initiatives must be developed to overcome the difficulties faced by short-term prisoners in accessing education, training and detoxification programmes. An initial assessment of prisoner needs in terms of education and training, medical, psychiatric and/or substance misuse difficulties should be conducted for both long and short-term prisoners and the appropriate interventions identified. Voluntary and community groups may then be best placed to work with and promote developmental programmes for short-term prisoners if the probation and welfare and prison services are too under-resourced to do so. The use of voluntary and community organisations may also help to over-come prisoners’ mistrust of the Prison service and Probation and Welfare staff. However, any co-ordination or liaison with voluntary and community groups must be regulated and structured.
3. Education programmes for Gardai, Judges, and other professionals working with the judiciary is necessary. It is essential that those in contact with homeless adults in a law enforcement capacity should understand more completely the particular difficulties that homeless men and women face and what the implications of imprisonment might be on their accommodation, family relationship or substance abuse status and on their

likelihood of re-offending. A greater understanding of the difficulties of this population may also help to improve relationships between, for example, the Gardai and homeless adults and foster greater tolerance between the two groups (homeless adults and others).

"When a person is homeless they often have no structure, no focus, and no respect for their environment. Often with their homelessness and anti-social behaviour come paranoia, suspicion and a bad attitude towards the Gardai" (Outreach Worker)

"Most of them [prisoners] come out of prison with a certain bitterness towards the system, and we are part of the system" (Probation & Welfare Officer)

4. Although still in the pilot phase and awaiting a formal evaluation, it is clear that proper resourcing of the Drug Court is essential to its long-term success. The current situation, in terms of allocation of spaces for detox or methadone treatment, undermines the willingness of drug users to avail of the service and seriously damages the prospects of offenders remaining drug free for 12 months.
5. An assessment of need immediately prior to release is also essential to provide the supports necessary to help prevent re-offending behaviour. Key to the successful "rehabilitation" of prisoners is continuity and consistency. Linkages between voluntary, community and statutory organisations must be fostered. Continuous assessment would also help to identify the risk factors for homelessness such as loss of accommodation, family relationship breakdown, dissipation of social networks etc.
6. The practice of releasing prisoners with no accommodation late on Friday evenings needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. Most statutory services e.g. Homeless Persons Unit, CWO etc are closed from Friday to Monday, hostel accommodation is usually assigned to people in advance of the weekend and voluntary organisation's supports are more limited – people in these circumstances have no option but to sleep out.

Services While in Prison

Efforts have been made by the Prison Service to respond to some needs by way of education (in partnership with the VEC) and development, limited medical and psychological services and limited drug treatment programmes. The limited statutory programme of support and training/development available is supplemented by voluntary organisations that work within the prisons on an outreach basis. However, the role of voluntary organisations is ad hoc. Formal links should be developed between the prison service and voluntary organisations, in order to protect prisoners from unfulfilled promises of support and advocacy and to ensure continuity and consistency in proposed interventions. Despite the developing linkages between the prison service and the voluntary sector, provision is inadequate and fails in particular to address the needs of short-term prisoners.

"They [prisoners] can get counselling while they are here, but it's hard for short-term prisoners. They come in and you may start them on counselling, and if they leave soon after you have opened up all these things and they are gone" (Probation & Welfare Officer).

"Well, the long-term prisoners, if they avail of the options and services available, they might have an advantage if they avail of those. The short-term prisoners can't avail of the programmes" (Outreach Worker).

It is clear from the interviews with respondents that access to and uptake of the developmental, educational and training and employment programmes within the prison is very poor among the respondents. The supports available in the prisons also fell short of the needs of the prisoners as identified by them. The level of support and intervention provided by both Prison and Probation and Welfare staff varies depending on the size of the prison and in full recognition of the current resource shortages in our prisons, the following recommendations are made:

1. In addition to assessments of need at the beginning and end of sentences, such assessments should be a recurring activity throughout the person's term of imprisonment as needs and personal circumstances change over time.
2. The importance of family and social networks cannot be under-estimated in helping to prevent homelessness for soon to be released prisoners. All facilities within the prison system should have a range of "family-friendly" facilities to encourage family visits.
3. Identification of family mediation and family support needs should be an integral part of the assessment process and the appropriate services developed to ensure that family networks are protected during periods of imprisonment.
4. There should be greater inter-statutory agency collaboration and these agencies must also collaborate more effectively with voluntary/community organisations to ensure the recognition and appropriate response to assessments of need, even when they are carried out by other institutions/organisations.
5. Pre-release advice, information and support is essential particularly for offenders sentenced to longer than 2 but less than 4 years. Given the resource difficulties faced by Probation and Welfare, voluntary organisations and Prison Service staff might be effectively utilised to provide this advice/information. Involvement of Prison Service staff in a supportive capacity may go some way to redressing issues of distrust of Prison staff by prisoners.
6. There is urgent need for a consistent and continuous Drug Policy for offenders/ex-offenders so that prisoners can avail of drug treatment programmes while in prison and be able to continue drug treatment programmes in the community. The detoxification, therapeutic and rehabilitative facilities for drug users should be expanded and the links between prison facilities and community facilities strengthened (Centre for Health Promotion, 2000). Continuity of drug treatment for ex-offenders would also increase accommodation chances, as

local authorities would be more willing to re-register applicants with a substance misuse history if the substance misuse is being addressed.

"A lot of crimes will be related to drug or alcohol use. In terms of drug use versus non-drug use, there is a lot of prostitution to feed the habit...A lot of times when a person is on methadone, they look for the extra buzz that they had with heroin, that might be shoplifting for the rush" (Outreach Worker)

8. Offenders sentenced to less than 9 months in prison should not be removed from community or city drug treatment clinics (waiting) lists.
9. The provision of alcohol treatment programmes should be improved. Alcohol is a proven pathway to offending behaviour and alcohol consumption is problematic for some. In light of this, greater emphasis should be placed on treatment programmes within prisons and with the collaboration of appropriate voluntary organisations such as AA.

"Society doesn't see alcohol as related to crime, but if you look at statistics its still linked to the most serious crimes that you have in Dublin" Probation & Welfare Officer

10. Offenders sentenced to less than 12 months in prison should not be removed from Local Authority waiting lists. The average waiting time for local authority housing for single adults is in excess of 12 months, removing applicants from the waiting list and forcing them to re-register on release from prison increases their cumulative time on the waiting list and increases the likelihood of an ex-prisoner remaining homeless for longer periods of time.
11. Prisoners at least 4 months prior to their release should be allowed to re-register on Local Authority housing waiting lists if their accommodation has been lost during the term of their imprisonment.

Post-release Support

The level and type of support required by an individual on their release from prison will depend on a number of factors including their family status, their existing family and social support networks, addiction issues, accommodation status, and their education, training and employment needs. The key principles underlying the provision of support following release from prison should be consistency and continuity. Key recommendations for post-release support include:

1. A variety of appropriate accommodation ranging from emergency accommodation hostels through to transition/supported housing through to permanent housing be that provided by local authorities, voluntary organisations or the private rented sector is needed. Factors such as family size, length of prison sentence (vis a vis life skills etc), addiction issues and so on must be considered. However, housing remains the key issue for both men and women. The need for secure and appropriate housing is acute. The role of housing cannot be underestimated when considering issues such as pathways into offending behaviour, drug and/or alcohol misuse, re-offending behaviour and training and employment opportunities. The impact of no accommodation is profound regardless of family status. For example, the issue of housing is essential for women leaving prison if they wish to become the primary care givers for their

children. However, the need for housing among single adult men is critical, as single men remain for longer periods on housing waiting lists because of the current method of prioritising potential tenants by local authorities.

"....they move [back] home sometimes, that is, if their parents want them after their crime. But a lot of time the parents don't want them at home, or the community doesn't want them. Maybe they stay on couches, cots, floors, wherever they can" (Probation & Welfare Officer)

2. Continuation of drug treatment programmes post-release. The issue of clinic waiting lists must be addressed, as should the need to show "dirty urine" for securing a place on a treatment programme.

"..a person is picked up for begging or a drug offence, they go on remand or get a sentence. Then they get on [methadone] maintenance, and the maintenance continues. Or else they go on total de-tox, and they are released into homelessness. They can't cope with homelessness without the addiction, so then they are back into the addiction" (Outreach Worker)

3. The role of the community PWO must be re-examined in terms of provision of support for released prisoners in the community including exploring linkages with voluntary organisations, with prison PWOs and so on. It is acknowledged that the PWS is in a state of staff crisis, however, greater co-operation and less bureaucracy is an essential need.
4. There is a need to expand the aftercare programme from those on Temporary Release to those who have been identified as in need of additional support. The introduction of needs assessments throughout the lifetime of an individual's sentence would greatly help in the identification of ex-offenders in need of support and the types of supports required.

The External Environment

The needs of homeless ex-offenders are complex and cut across sectoral divides. So these need to be represented in various developmental strategies emerging from both government and the voluntary and community sector. The recent publication of the Homeless Preventative Strategy for adults leaving institutional care, including prisons, is very welcome. However, it is essential that the recommendations are implemented and the programme for monitoring and evaluating the performance of the relevant departments and/or agencies be adhered to. The development and implementation of strategies to prevent homelessness among ex-prisoners should be developed in light of other strategies developed for the homeless population as a whole, e.g. Strategy on Youth Homelessness, Homeless Action Plans, Housing Strategies, Health Strategy, National Anti-Poverty Strategy etc. The ad hoc, non-integrated manner of service delivery has, to date, led to confusion, lack of accountability, lack of transparency and lack of effectiveness.

1. Housing departments should designate prison liaison personnel to work with Probation and Welfare or Prison Service staff to carry out homeless assessments at least 6 weeks in advance of release.

2. Housing Associations offering both long-term and transitional housing must ensure that their letting/admissions policies do not discriminate unnecessarily against ex-offenders.

Information Systems

1. The current system of gathering socio-demographic information about prisoners is inadequate. An information system that collects information on socio-demographic and other indicators is needed that will help identify prisoners' needs and provide more comprehensive information on Ireland's prisoner population.
2. The development of appropriate information systems to collect information on accommodation and other needs of offenders in pre-release for planning and provision of services and supports purposes.
3. Inclusion of prisoners who are homeless in homeless statistics is essential so as to provide a clearer picture of both the homeless and prisoner populations for planning purposes.
4. There needs to be recognition by prison authorities that rough sleeping is not the only form of homelessness, but prison statistics relating to homeless inmates should include those men and women who have been or who on release will be staying in hostels, B&Bs and dossing with friends and/or family.

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Appendix 1

Homelessness in Ireland

Prior to the introduction of the Housing Act, 1988 no formal assessment of homelessness by statutory bodies had been undertaken since the 1920s. The Housing Act imposed on all Local Authorities the responsibility of assessing individuals in housing need or homeless. Between the first assessment in 1989 and the most recent one in 1999, the number of people identified as homeless has increased by 250 per cent, from 1,491 to more than 5,000 and the number of households on the local authority waiting lists have increased from just over 19,000 to more than 40,000 (Department of the Environment, various years).

Table A.1 Homelessness in Ireland

	1989	1991	1993	1995	1999
Housing Waiting Lists	19,367	23,242	28,626	27,427	39,176
Homeless Individuals	1,491	2,371	2,172	2,501	5,234

Characteristics of the Homeless Population in Ireland

To date much of the debate regarding research on the issue of homelessness has concentrated on measurement, while it is vitally important to quantify the number of people experiencing homelessness, further information about their characteristics and needs is required if the issues of homelessness are to be adequately addressed.

Gender and Age

The stereotypical image of the homeless in Ireland is the middle-aged single man, however, research, particularly in Dublin, clearly shows this to be not the case. The 1999 assessment of homelessness in Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow found that while there were more men (1850) than women (1050) homeless in Dublin, 67 per cent of the men included in the assessment were less than 45 years of age (Williams & O'Connor, 1999).

Family Status

Information on the family status of those assessed as being homeless by local authorities is not available in housing statistics issued by the Department of the Environment. Nonetheless, information regarding household size that provides some indication of marital or family status is included. The 1999 assessment of homeless households in all local authority and urban district council areas show that 78 per cent are single, while 21 per cent of households are made up of more than one person.

Educational Attainment

Little information is available on the educational attainment for those out-of-home. Research by Feeney et al, (2000) investigating the mental health of 100 homeless men in Dublin found that 55 per cent had completed only primary school and only 13 per cent had completed secondary school.

Employment/Source of Income

There is very little information available on employment patterns and/or sources of income for households out-of-home. Annual Focus Ireland (2001) organisational statistics show that 35 per cent of service users were in receipt of unemployment benefit, unemployment assistance or Supplementary Welfare Allowance. Approximately 2 per cent of customers were employed. However, recent analysis of the employment status of those seeking advice from Focus Ireland's Crisis Desk (a drop-in information and support service) found that approximately 20 per cent were working and yet still unable to secure reasonable and/or secure private rented accommodation.

In response to the growing housing and homelessness crisis, Homelessness – An Integrated Strategy was launched by the Government in May 2000, key recommendations from the strategy document included the setting up of homeless fora in each local authority area to prepare strategies to tackle homelessness, provision of appropriate accommodation, provision of outreach and settlement services, health boards to carry out assessment of needs in their areas and the development of preventative strategies. The Integrated Strategy recommended that: "Prison management and the probation and welfare service should, through sentence management and a pre-release review process, ensure that prisoners are released with appropriate accommodation being made available for them. Where a situation does arise where a prisoner is being released but is without accommodation, prior arrangements should be made to ensure that appropriate emergency accommodation is available" (Dept of Environment & Local Government, 2000:39)

As there is some evidence that ex-offenders present themselves for emergency accommodation on their release from prison, the Probation and Welfare Service should examine the need for half-way and other sheltered accommodation for ex-offenders to ensure their re-integration into society" (Department of the Environment & Local Government, 2000:39)

In response to the Integrated Strategy a Homeless Preventative Strategy for those leaving institutional care has been developed. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform has drawn up a strategy for offenders which sets out a series of objectives to meet the needs of homeless ex-offenders. Among the key actions required are the following:

- A specialist unit will be established by the Probation and Welfare Service to assist with offenders who are homeless on release from custody.
- The Prison Service, together with the Probation and Welfare Service, will build and operate transitional housing units as part of their overall strategy of preparing offenders for release. Approval has been given for facilities in Limerick and Cork.
- Additional Probation and Welfare staff will be provided to assist homeless offenders and to help them with resettlement.
- A programme will be put in place by the Probation and Welfare Service and the VECs to ensure that all prisoners who are pursuing educational courses will be able to continue them following their release.

A key feature of Homeless Preventative Strategy is that the relevant Government Departments, in the case of ex-offenders, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform will put monitoring systems in place to ensure that the measures in the strategy are implemented. The Probation and Welfare Service and the Prisons Service will be asked to make regular six monthly reports to the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform on these measures.

Appendix 2

Services to Offenders While in Prison

The services currently available to offenders while in prison include:

- Prison education services
- Work and training
- Medical services including psychiatric and psychology services
- Addiction services
- Probation and Welfare Services (PWS)
- Visiting arrangements

Prison Education Services (PES)

PES consists of partnership between the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and a range of educational agencies from the community including the Vocational Education Committees (VECs), the Public Library services, and institutions such as the National College of Art and Design and the Open University. The education curriculum includes physical education, health education, social education, creative activities and Department of Education examinations including the Junior and Leaving Certificates (Irish Prisons Service, 2000).

Work and Training

An industrial work and training programme has developed since the 1970s and specialist industrial training is now provided in a number of prisons. Courses in welding, machining, general engineering, electronics, introduction to industry, catering, printing and construction are available to prisoners. A total of 100 staff are involved in these programmes (Irish Prisons Service, 2000).

A recent development in job preparation for prisoners is the CONNECT project. Established in 1998 on a two-year pilot programme, it is a collaborative effort between the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the National Training and Development Institute of the Rehab Group. The programme is based around a needs assessment programme for each offender included in the programme; an individual programme planning system is used to provide support and structured activities for the individual. Originally established in just the Training Unit of the Mountjoy complex, the CONNECT project will be extended to all prisons in the Republic between 2000 and 2006.

Medical Services

Part-time medical officers are assigned to each prison and detention centre and they are responsible for the medical welfare of offenders. Despite the appointment of the first Director of Prison Medical Services in 1990, expenditure on medical services within the prison service remains low. At 1 per cent in 1992 the proportion of the prison service budget dedicated to health care was the lowest of the 27 Council of Europe countries surveyed. The budget for healthcare in 1996 was approximately £1.3 million, approximately 1 per cent of the total prison budget (Vaughan, 2001).

Visiting psychiatrists employed by the health boards provide psychiatric services to offenders. Prisoners in need of in-patient care can be transferred, by ministerial order, to a psychiatric hospital, usually the Central Mental Hospital in Dundrum. The psychology service provides a clinical psychology service to offenders, mainly in the form of on-going counselling and therapy. The psychology service deals primarily with those serving long-term sentences, however, it does identify those short-term offenders who display obvious signs of distress. The psychology service also plays a role in the delivery of the sex offenders' programme and the induction and ongoing training of prison officers.

Addiction Services

The Training Unit, was designated a drug-free prison, and a unit of Mountjoy prison was designated as a structured detoxification unit in 1996.

The drug-free Training Unit provides for the first time, a drug-free environment for those who wish to avoid drugs or the pressure to bring drugs into the prison. Counselling services and voluntary urine analysis help to ensure the continuing drug-free status of the unit. The structured detoxification unit has a capacity for 9 prisoners per programme. Drug using prisoners may apply for the programme whereby they receive a 14-21 day detoxification programme followed by a 6-week therapeutic programme. The detoxification programme has had a 93 per cent completion rate and the proportion lapsing after 12 months was 78 per cent (Crowley, 1999).

A recent Irish Prison Service report recommends that offenders with problematic drug use will be given continuity of care and treatment and that through-care and follow-up aftercare are essential to ensure that an individual remains drug free.

A recently instituted alternative, albeit in pilot form, is the Drug Court. The Drug Court was established in early 2001 and is based on US-style drug courts. The Court will allow offenders to remain outside of prison as long as they adhere to a programme of drug treatment, stay drug-free and do not commit any further offences. Although admittedly in a pilot phase the drug court only deals with individuals from the North Inner City and more importantly access to detoxification in the community or in hospital is extremely difficult to secure.

Statutory Services Available After Release From Prison - Probation and Welfare Service

The main function of the Probation and Welfare Service (PWS) is to supervise offenders in the community and on release from prison. Approximately 80 per cent of the services' work is in responding to the implementation of court orders. According to Vaughan (2001), this includes the

1. Provision of advice and information to the courts on offenders to assist in sentencing decisions;
2. Implementation and enforcement of community sentences passed by the court;
3. Design, provision and promotion of effective programmes for supervising offenders in the community; and
4. Assistance to offenders, before and after their release, so that they can lead law-abiding lives.

However, it must be noted that the nature of offenders in contact with service has changed over time, as more and more offenders have problems with drug and alcohol addiction. More than 50

per cent of those in contact with PWS have had a history of problematic drug use and need support to access drug rehabilitation and detoxification programmes. The PWS also faces staff shortages, the average caseload for probation officers in the Republic is claimed to be 60 as compared to 21 in Northern Ireland and a maximum of 30 in Austria. Additionally, a significant proportion of a probation officer's work is administrative which takes away from the time that can be spent dealing with clients and their needs (Vaughan, 2001).

Appendix 3

Respondent Questionnaire

PACE/FOCUS IRELAND RESEARCH

DEMOGRAPHICS

- Gender
Male [1] Female [2]
- How old are you? _____
- What is your marital status?
Single [1] Married/Co-habiting [2]
Lone Parent [3] Div/Widowed/Separated [4]
- Do you have children? Yes [1] No [2] (skip to question 9)
- How many? _____
- Who is currently caring for them?
I am [1] Partner/Spouse [2]
Parent [3] Immediate family [4]
Friends [5] In Care [6]
Other (specify) [7] _____
- Who cared for them when you were in prison?
Partner/Spouse [1] My parents [2]
Immediate family [3] Friends [4]
In Care [5]
Other (specify) [6] _____
- How old is the youngest, how old is the eldest? Eldest _____ Youngest _____
- What part of Dublin are you from? (If not from Dublin, specify country or city of origin)?

- What level of school did you finish?
Some primary [1] Intermediate/Junior Certificate [2]
Leaving Certificate [3] Diploma/Degree [4]
Other [5]
- What age were you when you left school? _____
- What was your source of income prior to going to prison?
In training/education [1] Employed FT or PT [2]
Receipt of Dole [3] Receipt of Disability Allowance [4]
Lone Parent [5] Other [6]
- Where were you living prior to going to prison (most recent)?
Family Home [1] (skip to qs15) LA house/flat [2] (skip to qs15)
PR house/flat [3] (skip to qs15) Sleeping rough [4]
B&B [5] Hostel [6]
Dossing [7] Other [8]
- Are you currently homeless, if yes, how long have you been without a place to stay? (in months)

15. Were you homeless before going to prison this time?
 Yes [1] (go to qs16) No [2] (skip to qs17)
16. Do you feel that there was any connection between your homeless and the crime you committed? (probe, explore why and how)

17. Have you ever or are you currently using any illegal/illicit drugs?
 Yes [1] (go to qs18) No [2] (skip to qs20)
18. Can you please tell me which drugs you have ever used or are currently using?
 (circle as many as appropriate)

Type of Drug	Past Use	Current Use
Hash/cannabis	1	1
Heroin (smoked)	2	2
Heroin(injected)	3	3
Cocaine	4	4
Barbiturates	5	5
Prescribed medication	6	6
Other	7	7

19. Do you feel that there was any connection between your drug use and the crime you committed? (probe, explore why and how)

20. Do you drink alcohol? Yes [1] (go to qs21) No [2] (skip to qs23)
21. How many drinks would you have during a typical week? _____
22. Do you feel that there was any connection between your alcohol use and the crime you committed? (probe, explore why and how)

DURING SENTENCE

23. In what prison did you serve your sentence (or last sentence)?

Cloverhill	[1]	Wheatfield	[1]
Mountjoy	[2]	Arbour Hil	[2]
Training Unit (Mountjoy)	[3]	St Patrick's	[3]
Dochas Centre	[4]	Other (specify)	[4] _____

24. Did you participate in or receive any advice on participating or accessing any of the following?
(circle as many as apply)

Job search (CONNECT)	[1]	IT skills	[7]
Communication skills	[2]	Counselling	[8]
Anti-violence programme	[3]	Detox/rehab	[9]
Offending behaviour	[4]	Housing advice	[10]
Social & life skills	[5]	Welfare advice	[11]
Education (type of)	[6]	Other	[12]

25. Did you have any contact (letters or visits) with your family or partner/spouse?

Yes 1 (go to qs25a) No 2 (skip to qs26)

25a. Specificity type of contact

PRE-RELEASE

26. Did you receive information or advice about any of the following before you left prison?
(circle as many as apply)

Housing	[1]	Counselling	[5]
Social welfare	[2]	Rehab/detoxification programmes	[6]
Medical (physical/mental health needs)	[3]	Other	[7]
Training	[4]		

27. What type of information did you receive (probe about names and addresses of any organisations they were told about, the types of services/information provided etc)?

POST RELEASE

28. Did you have a permanent place to stay on release? (e.g. back to your home with parents or partner, private rented flat, Local authority house etc) Yes [1] No [2]

29. Where did you stay?

Moved back in with my parents (i.e. lived there before prison)*	[1] (skip to qs33)
Moved back in with my partner/spouse (i.e. lived there before prison)*	[2] (skip to qs33)
Stayed with friends temporarily	[3]
Stayed in a hostel	[4]
Stayed in a B&B	[6]
Slept rough	[7]
Other	[8]

* If the respondent is currently homeless, please explore why he/she had to leave their parents/partners place of residence – please record this information on a separate sheet of paper.

30. Have you had any contact with family/partner since your release from prison? (letters or visits)
 Yes [1] No [2] (skip to qs32)
31. What kind of contact have you had with your family?
32. You said earlier that you had a permanent place to stay before you went into prison (see qs13 and qs15), why did that accommodation break down during your time in prison?
- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Relationship with partner broke down | [1] |
| Relationship with parents broke down | [2] |
| Lost PR accommodation | [3] |
| Lost LA accommodation | [4] |
| Other | [5] |
33. What was your source of income following your release?
 (issues around working in prison and any savings)
- | | | | |
|------------------------|-----|--------------------------------|-----|
| Unemployment Benefit | [1] | Begging/tapping | [5] |
| Lone parents allowance | [2] | Savings from working in prison | [6] |
| Disability benefit | [3] | Financial support from family | [7] |
| Employment FT/PT | [4] | Other | [8] |

IF CURRENTLY HOMELESS

34. Did you receive any advice prior to your release from prison on accessing emergency accommodation? Yes [1] No [2] (skip to qs36)
35. Where did this advice come from?
- | | | | |
|--|-----|-----------------------------|-----|
| Probation and Welfare | [1] | Prison officers/authorities | [2] |
| Voluntary organisations visiting the prison (please list which ones) | | [3] | |
| Other | [4] | | |
36. Were you able to find work after your release?
 Yes [1] No [2]
37. Did you need or receive any of the following? (circle as many as apply)
- | Help | Needed | Received |
|------------------------------|--------|----------|
| Counselling | 1 | 1 |
| Addiction treatment | 2 | 2 |
| Employment advice | 3 | 3 |
| Literacy & numeracy training | 4 | 4 |
| Further training/education | 5 | 5 |
38. Did you access any of the following services when you were released from prison? (circle as many as apply)
- | | | | |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|----|
| Focus Ireland | 1 | Treble R | 7 |
| Merchant's Quay | 2 | Ana Liffey | 8 |
| Simon Community | 3 | Pathways | 9 |
| Vincent de Paul | 4 | SAIL Project | 10 |
| PACE | 5 | Other (specify) | 11 |
| Bridge Project | 6 | | |

39. What have been the main problems/difficulties for you since you left prison?
(please rank according to importance: 1 being the most significant difficulty and 11 being the least important problem – please note that the respondent can rank all options or the most important 3-5 issues)

- | | |
|---|-----|
| Accessing housing/finding a place to live | [] |
| Finding work | [] |
| Trying to access drug treatment/drug rehab | [] |
| Trying to access alcohol treatment programmes | [] |
| Claiming social welfare/getting info on entitlements | [] |
| Managing my money/paying the bills | [] |
| Reconciliation with family | [] |
| Reconciliation with partner | [] |
| Medical services (more detail re physical/medical health needs) | [] |
| Caring for children/maintaining contact with children | [] |
| Generally adjusting to life outside | [] |

39a. Record any additional information from the answers above

40. If the respondent has had more than one sentence in prison, probe as to why they re-offended? (e.g. family problems, drug problems, mental health problems, homelessness, unable to cope being outside etc.)

41. What kind of things (services/supports) would you have found really helpful when you were leaving/left prison? (probe around accommodation options, counselling options, drug rehab, help with establishing contact with family etc.)

42. What kind of practical help would you have liked to have had when you left prison/when leaving prison? (issues around housing advice, contacting family, social welfare entitlements, day centres for activities, education opportunities etc.)

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE OF PENAL SYSTEM

44. Number of convictions

45. Number of remands

46. Number of times in prison?

47. Age at 1st conviction

48. Age at 1st remand

49. Age at 1st imprisonment

50. Total time sentenced to prison (years/months)

51. Type of offence(s)

52. Were you homeless before your first experience of being in prison?

Yes [1] No [2]

53. How old were you when you first experienced homelessness?

CLOSE AND THANK THE RESPONDENT FOR THEIR TIME

Any additional comments from the interviewer about the interview process (e.g. interviewee demeanour, ability to remember details, recall particular events etc.)

Appendix 4

Key Informant Interview Schedules

KEY INFORMANTS – PROBATION AND WELFARE

Current practice in terms of information provision and assistance to ex-offenders (during, and after term of imprisonment)?

What types of linkages between P&W and voluntary organisations?

What types of linkages between P&W and local authorities? i.e. advocating on behalf of clients etc.

Any staff with specialist knowledge of housing situation i.e. access to housing, housing benefits, voluntary housing organisations etc.?

Any assessments carried out prior to leaving prison? Would you like to see assessments carried out and by whom?

What do you consider the greatest hardships facing your own clients? i.e. housing, employment, education/training, drug treatment, family relationships etc.

See a role for supported housing? What kind of role?

Would you like to see mandatory reporting to P&W?

What kind of relationships do you have with people using the P&W service?

KEY INFORMANTS – PRISON MANAGEMENT

Current practice around advising soon to be released prisoners in terms of housing, education, employment etc? Anything done? Resettlement plans?

What would you like to see in place and who should provide this service?

Issue of recording homelessness by authorities – why not use the legislative definition from the Housing Act 1988?

Current figures estimate between 5 and 7 per cent of the prison population are homeless on entry into prison system – do you think this is a true reflection of incidence of homelessness among prisoners?

Role of work in prisons and level of remuneration – is it adequate? (findings from study in UK show this is quite important) could this be used as method of ensuring savings in place on leaving prison?

Access to training and education while in prison – how can this be improved? What about short-term prisoners?

Do you see any linkages between drug use, offending behaviour and homelessness – explain?

How do you think this might be tackled, within the context of the prison environment?

Do you notice any difference in homelessness rates among short-term prisoners and long-term prisoners? Which group is most vulnerable to homelessness?

How do you think this might be tackled? Short-term and long-term prisoners – joint strategy or separate? Different needs what are they?

Issue of recidivism – linkages between homelessness, drug use etc and recidivism?

What kind of activities/supports could be introduced to reduce incidence of homelessness among ex-offenders? - Role of prisons, probation and welfare, voluntary organisations?

Greatest difficulties facing ex-offenders on release from prison?

Qs 3-5 not necessary for floor staff

KEY INFORMANTS – VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

Describe type of work done by your organisation and type of services provided?

What percentage of customers would have experience of prison?

For what types of crimes would your customers typically have been imprisoned for?

Do you do any work in the prisons? – prison visits, advice sessions etc?

Would you like to see this become part of your work (if not already)?

If already doing this work, what impact does this kind of work have on customers?

What is your experience of the prison system for your customers (any differences between men and women), have your customers ever spoken about any advice/assistance from statutory authorities in resettlement etc?

Do you see any links between homelessness and crime and recidivism? – what are they?

Differences between experiences of short-term and long-term prisoners on release? What are the differences?

How can the issue of homelessness among ex-offenders be best addressed, who needs to take responsibility, what kind of services/interventions need to be put in place?